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AN EXPOSITION
OF OUR BLESSED SAVIOUR'S SERMON
ON THE
MOUNT,

George Whichcot.

A PRACTICAL

EXPOSITION

Of the Latter Part of Our

Saviour's Sermon

ON THE

MOUNT,

From the BEATITUDES, to the End of the SERMON.

By *JAMES GARDINER*, M. A.
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THE

PREFACE.

THO' the Beatitudes are Subjects so copious and fruitful, that in explaining of them, I have had occasion in the former Volume to trace out *almost* the whole Practice of the Christian Life; yet, because in the remaining Paragraphs of this most excellent Sermon on the *Mount*, there are some Precepts altogether *new*, and others which may give an Opportunity of setting those already explain'd, in yet a clearer and a fuller Light: I have taken them all into this Second Volume, wherein, avoiding Repetition as much as is possible, I have chiefly enlarged upon such Duties and Vertues as our Saviour recommends to us, which were either not mentioned, or but briefly hinted at before; and up-

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on such Arguments, as our Saviour here makes use of to perswade us of the Necessity and Reasonableness of them.

I have likewise for Brevity sake, pass'd by sometimes the *first* Opportunity of enlarging upon some Points, and deferr'd them to another Chapter to which they as properly belonged; because there would else in expounding so large and comprehensive a Discourse, as this of our Saviour, have often been a Necessity of repeating what had been said before. So that if the Reader meet not always with as much as he expected in the first Chapters, he is desired not to condemn the Omission, till he has read over the whole Exposition; which is designed for a compleat, but short Summary of Christian Practice.

All I have farther to add, is, that the Reader look for no more than a plain practical Exposition, the full Sense and Meaning only of our Saviour's Precepts. This I thought proper to advertise, because some (I know) have found fault with the first Volume (*viz.* of the Beatitudes) for want of more *Application:* they were pleas'd to call the Chapters *Sermons*, and then thought them deficient in the oratorical Part; but *this* was *their* Mistake and not *mine:* For I called

led them not *Sermons*, but a *practical Expoſition*, and tho' I had attempted three or four of the *Beatitudes* firſt in the Pulpit, I afterwards cut off all the Application, and ſo much altered the Method and Style of the whole, to adapt them to this Deſign, that they might really be ſaid to be done, *de novo*; and coſt me as much freſh Trouble, as they would have done, if I had never treated of them in another manner, which was the Reaſon that I never preach'd any Part of this Second Volume, but wrote it at firſt in this way of Expoſition.

THE

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CHAP.

Neither do Men light a Candle, and put it under a Buſhel: but on a Candleſtick, and it giveth Light unto all that are in the Houſe.

Let your Light ſo ſhine before Men, that they may ſee your Good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.

THIS firſt Paragraph is an Exhortation to be *Exemplary* in our Religion, enforced by ſeveral Compariſons, which ſhew that God by calling us to the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, *deſigns* and *marks us out* for good Examples of Virtue and Holineſs to the World, that ſuch Examples *may do much Service*, and that Men who know the Excellence of that Religion we profeſs, *will certainly expect them from us.* Let me therefore open to you the true Meaning of what our Saviour has delivered, in the four Verſes now under Conſideration, by ſuppoſing him to have expreſs'd it in the following Manner.

" I have told you, my Diſciples, that " if ye will indeed be Followers of me, " ye ſhall be bleſſed and happy. The very " Practice of what I require will make " you ſo; and the future Rewards of " your Obedience will more than anſwer

" all

" all your Pains and all your Expectati-
" ons. But this is an Argument from
" your Intereſt only; there are other and
" more generous Motives yet behind.
" 'Tis fit that as ye ſee I have provided
" for your Happineſs, ye ſhould ſo live
" as may be for my Glory. If ye live not
" more ſtrictly and vertuouſly in every
" Point than the Generality of Men, the
" World will think, I either taught you
" no better, or that ye deſpiſe my Teach-
" ing, both which will be diſhonourable
" to me. But if ye live as I have taught
" you, they will ſay *that God is in you of*
" *a Truth*; they will commend that ex-
" cellent Inſtitution I deliver you, and
" will be drawn to love and to embrace
" that Doctrine, and thoſe Manners which
" are ſo much the Ornament and the Hap-
" pineſs of thoſe who do embrace them.
" I know however the Force of Truth is
" ſuch, that when they hear my Goſpel
" preach'd, and read the Laws which I
" have given you, they will own the Ex-
" cellence of my moral Precepts, and
" will be ſure to expect that ye who ac-
" knowledge me to be your Maſter, ſhould
" *do the Things that I ſay*, and ſhould be
" as much better than other Men, as my
" Inſtructions are beyond the Virtue of
" the *Gentile* or the *Jewiſh* Schools. When

" they talk of any Part of Righteouſneſs,
" they will naturally look *to you* for an
" Example, as the Religion ye profeſs o-
" bliges you; the Intention whereof is
" more than a meer *inward Faith*, and
" ſecret Piety; it is to make you *emi-*
" *nently*, as well as *really* good, and to
" ſet you up as Public Patterns to Man-
" kind. Conſider your ſelves therefore,
" as the *Salt of the Earth*, by whoſe Spi-
" ritual Converſation all who know you,
" may be ſeaſoned with a due Reliſh and
" Tincture of Chriſtian Piety and Good-
" neſs. But if ye become inſipid and
" uſeleſs, ye will be the worſt and the
" moſt contemptible of all Men. Con-
" ſider your ſelves as the *Light of the*
" *World*, *a Candle ſet on a Candleſtick*,
" for the Direction and Uſe of all that
" are about you, and as deſign'd by your
" Heavenly Father and Me, to light Men
" out of the Ways of Ignorance and Vice,
" and ſhew them by your bright Exam-
" ples the Way to Truth and Holineſs,
" and eternal Glory. Conſider that the
" Eyes of all Men will be upon you as
" profeſſing ſuch an holy Inſtitution.
" Whatever ye do will be obſerved, and
" can no more be hid than a *City that*
" *ſtands on an Hill*: and therefore as ye de-
" clare your ſelves to be my Diſciples, let

" the

" the Light of your ſtrict and virtuous " Lives ſo ſhine before Men, that they " ſeeing your good Works, and admiring " the excellent and uſeful Spirit of Chri- " ſtianity, as it appears in you, *may glori-* " *fy your Father which is in Heaven*, and " chearfully ſubſcribe to worſhip and o- " bey him as ye do.

All this I take to be the true Deſign and Meaning of our Saviour's Precept here, and the Reaſon upon which it is grounded. Let us now conſider more diſtinctly,

I. What thoſe good Works are, wherein it is expected we ſhould become Examples to all about us.
II. What it is to be exemplary in thoſe good Works.
III. Who they are, that are concerned to be thus exemplary in good Works.
IV. How they may be ſaid to glorify God thereby.

I. What thoſe good Works are wherein it is expected we ſhould become Examples to all about us. They are in general the ſincere and conſtant Practice of the whole Chriſtian Religion, but particularly of ſuch Duties and Vertues as have been recommended to us in the foregoing Beatitudes. As,

(1.) Humility, thinking and ſpeaking modeſtly of our ſelves, and of every Thing relating to us, deſpiſing no Man, condeſcending to thoſe below us, being courteous to all, and ready to give Place, not only where *it is* due, but ſometimes where *it is not*, rather than contend for it: Sitting looſe to all Enjoyments of the World, not ambitious of Power, or covetous of Riches, not vain and haughty if we have them, nor eager in deſiring more; but content with our Condition whatever it is, bearing Poverty without Murmuring, and Contempt without Reſentment.

(2.) An hearty Sorrow for all *our own Sins*, expreſſed in a ready Compliance with the Diſcipline of the Church, and a careful Avoidance of all Temptations for the future. A charitable *Concern*, or a compaſſionate *Grief* for the *Sins* or the *Calamities of others*, but a great Calmneſs and Moderation with regard to any temporal Evils of our own.

(3.) Meekneſs under all Sufferings from the Hand of God or Men. Obedience and Reverence to the King, to Magiſtrates, to Parents, Husbands, Maſters, or any other to whom we ſhould be ſubject. Obliging Behaviour and Reſpect to Friends. Forbearance, Patience, and doing good to Enemies. Giving no wil-

ful

ful Offence or Provocation to any Body. Not given to Poſitiveneſs or Contradiction. Not railing at or ſpeaking evil of others, but covering the Faults of our Neighbours in Converſation, and putting the beſt Conſtruction upon every Thing that it will bear. And laſtly, all manner of Gentleneſs towards thoſe who are under our Government, or any way below us.

(4.) A generous Aim at Perfection, a Mind not ſatisfied with any certain Stint of Goodneſs, but catching at all Opportunities of growing wiſer and better every Day. Frequenting the *publick Prayers* and *Sermons* at Church, and that with a ſevere and cloſe Attention, a regular and decent Piety, receiving as often as we can, the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*: keeping up the Exerciſe of Religion alſo in our Families by Prayer, Reading, and good Inſtructions. And together with all this, a prudent and induſtrious Zeal to make Religion flouriſh in our Neighbourhood, or where-ever elſe we can promote it.

(5.) A merciful Diſpoſition to pity, ſupport, and do all the Good we can, to ſuch as are in Want and Poverty, or any other Affliction, *weeping with thoſe that weep*, being *kind and tender hearted*, charitably

giving or lending as there is Occaſion: Releaſing Debts where an honeſt minded Debtor is not able to pay; helping the Oppreſſed and Fatherleſs to their Right, ſo far as it is in our Power; and puniſhing Offenders (when the Law calls for it) in ſuch a manner as will ſhew us far from an ill-natured Delight in puniſhing.

(6.) An honeſt Simplicity in all our Words and Actions, without any Diſguiſe or double Meanings, being ſincere in all our Friendſhips and all our Civilities; fair and ingenuous in all our Dealings, plain and open in our Promiſes, and juſt to the Performance of them. A ſtrict *Purity* in Converſation, avoiding every Thing obſcene or indecent; a Chaſtity in our Behaviour, free from not only all actual Lewdneſs, but from all laſcivious Steps towards it. A conſtant Courſe of *Temperance* and *Sobriety*, abhorring even the moſt remote Degrees of Drunkenneſs.

(7.) A peaceable Temper with regard both to the Church and State, deteſting all manner of Schiſms in the one, and Factions in the other; and labouring ſo far as it may be any way in our Power, to prevent or put an End to ſuch Diſturbances, not affecting Novelty, not raiſing a Duſt againſt every Thing we do not like; but attending impartially to Arguments

ments on either ſide, complying as far as we can, or retaining our different Sentiments with Charity and Good-nature; endeavouring alſo in our Neighbourhood to make Peace amongſt others; and, *as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all Men.* Rom. 12. 18.

(8.) Conſtancy under Perſecutions; *holding faſt the Form of ſound Words*, the Faith and Doctrine of the Goſpel; going on with Reſolution and Courage in the Diſcharge of every Chriſtian Duty, whatever Sufferings, Reproach, or Danger may lie before us; and rejoicing under all, as having an Eye to the bleſſed Recompence of Reward. 2 Tim. 1. 13.

Theſe, and ſuch other Vertues and Graces, make up that *Light* which is to *ſhine before Men*, the Character of an accompliſhed exemplary Chriſtian. And can there be a more beautiful Character in the World? Can there be a more illuſtrious Ornament to human Nature, than one thus uniformly good?

Let us now conſider,

II. What it is to be *exemplary* in theſe good Works; or what it is that is expected from us more than ordinary, with regard to them. And here,

(1.) We

(1.) We muſt labour to be *eminent* in every Vertue; not only to have more Vertues than the Generality of Men, but to practiſe them in a greater Height and Perfection. We muſt do ſomething *extraordinary* in Religion; not contenting our ſelves with the common Degrees of Goodneſs, or with juſt ſo much as may ſerve to ſatisfy the Clamours of Conſcience, or be ſufficient, as we think, to bring us to Heaven. We muſt endeavour to be more humble, more meek and peaceable, and merciful, *&c.* than thoſe who have ſome Reputation in the World for being ſo. We muſt thus behave our ſelves, not only when there is no great Temptation to the contrary, or when an Occaſion happens to us in the common Road of things, but in the moſt difficult and trying Inſtances we muſt give a Proof by our outward Carriage, that the Vertue we pretend to is owing to an inward Principle, and is really habitual to us from the Power and Influence of our Religion.

(2.) The ſetting a good Example neceſſarily implies that our Vertues ſhould be *viſible and conſpicuous to the World.* But here lies a material Difficulty, ſo to manage this Point, as that Pride and Hypocriſy ſhall have no ſhare in it. For our Savi-

Saviour cannot be thought to tolerate hereby (much leſs to require) that Phariſaical Vanity and Oſtentation, which in ſo many other Paſſages he condemns with all the Earneſtneſs imaginable. The Meaning therefore of this Precept, *Let your Light ſo ſhine before Men, that they may ſee your good Works*, cannot be, that our own Glory and Reputation ſhould be the Principle of what we do, or that we ſhould have any Deſign at all upon the Eſteem of Men, ſo far as it concerns our ſelves. It is the Vertue, and the Divine Inſtitution of Chriſtianity, from which that Vertue flows, and not the vertuous *Man*, which we ſhould labour to recommend to the Eſteem of Men by our Lives. It is that they may *glorify our Father which is in Heaven*, as the latter Part of the Verſe ſufficiently explains it. The Glory of God and the Good of Men, muſt be our only Aim in producing our Vertues or good Actions to the public View. We muſt avoid, as much as is poſſible, all ſelfiſh and unworthy Schemes of *Applauſe*, *Reſpect*, or *private Intereſt*, in them; referring all the *Honour to God*, the Author and Inſpirer of whatever Good we can attain to; and deſigning *all the Benefit* (over and above our own Salvation) *to the Souls of others*, who may there-

thereby be wrought upon to come into the ſame good Meaſures of Vertue and Religion, which they ſee us practiſe, and by conſequence be brought at length to the ſame eternal Happineſs which we hope for.

Our next Enquiry (tho' it may ſeem in part prevented) will demand ſome neceſſary Enlargements. Let us conſider therefore,

III. *Who* they are that are thus concerned to be *exemplary in Good Works*. *All Chriſtians* in general, every one who has profeſſed himſelf by Baptiſm a Diſciple of the Holy *Jeſus*, is obliged by this Precept to Exemplarineſs; for it is to theſe (and not to his Apoſtles only, or the Clergy) that our Lord directs himſelf in this whole Sermon: And therefore we find the very ſame Compariſon or Metaphor, which is here made uſe of, *Light* and *Shining*, apply'd expreſly by St. *Paul* to *every Chriſtian*, as ſuch; for ſo he exhorts the *Philippians*, *That ye be blameleſs and harmleſs, the Sons of God, without Rebuke, in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe Nation, amongſt whom ye SHINE as LIGHTS in the World.* Every Chriſtian, let his Station or Circumſtances be what they will, whether he be a public

Vid. *Introduction to* Vol. I.

or

or a private Perſon, known to many or to few, is to look upon himſelf as obliged to be *holy in all manner of Converſation, as he that has called him is holy*; and make it his Buſineſs ſo to live, as may be a Credit to the Religion he pretends to. This, by his very Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, is expected from him at all Times, and in all Places; but more eſpecially when he lives among Heathens, and other Infidels, Strangers or Enemies to the Name of CHRIST, who will be generally apt to form their Judgment of our Religion rather by the Influence it has upon our Conſciences and Practice, than by its own Truth and moral Excellence. They hear it called indeed an holy Religion, an Inſtitution of great and glorious Vertues (and ſuch it certainly is) but when they caſt their Eyes upon *our Lives*, and obſerve, that inſtead of all this Holineſs and Vertue, that ſhould follow there, we are *no better than themſelves*, and too often (I fear it may be ſaid) much worſe; will it not be a moſt dreadful Prejudice to Chriſtianity? Let all who travel abroad to ſuch Parts of the World where our Religion is not known or not received, all who go to reſide in our Foreign Factories and Plantations, conſider this Precept of our Lord, as more immediately affecting *them*. 1 Pet. 1. 15.

Let

Let it be their Care above all things ſo to
Phil. 1. 27. 1 Pet. 2. 12. live, *as becomes the Goſpel of Chriſt, having their Converſation honeſt among the Gentiles, that by their good Works which they ſhall behold, they may glorify God in the Day of Viſitation*; and be ready to embrace, when preached to them, that holy Faith, that pure and perfect Law, which ſhines ſo bright in Practice. But if they live contrary to it, they diſgrace themſelves, and their Religion too; they make Chriſtianity to be abhorred, the *Name of GOD*
Rom. 2. 24. 1 Tim. 6. 1. and CHRIST *to be blaſphemed among the Gentiles; and woe to him by whom the*
Mat. 18. 7. *Offence cometh.* The Caſe is much the ſame with ſuch as live in a vicious Neighbourhood, where Chriſtianity is profeſs'd, but little or nothing of the true Spirit of it to be ſeen. Thoſe few who are good in ſuch a Place, have need to be *exemplary* in Goodneſs, and have peculiar Obligations upon them ſo to be. That Chriſtian who by the Grace of God has withdrawn himſelf from the evil Cuſtoms and Practices of the wicked World about him, and makes Profeſſion to live more ſtrictly to his Saviour's Rules, to be more ſober, vertuous, and religious, than thoſe others, and thoſe much the greater num-
Tit. 1. 16. ber, who own the *Name of CHRIST, but in their Works deny him*, is very deeply con-

concern'd to give a great and eminent Example of all ſorts of Vertue. To be indifferently or obſcurely Good, is but a barren, I had almoſt ſaid a contemptible Character *in him.* GOD and the World expect much more from him, or the one will have but little Glory, and the other but little Benefit by his Example. He is bound in *Point of Honour*, as well as Conſcience, to *excel*, as he pretends to be more effectually convinced than others, of the Excellency of the Chriſtian Law, and the Reaſonableneſs and Neceſſity of Living up to it. But to proceed, tho' *all Chriſtians* in whatever Station are bound to be Exemplary, that others may be drawn to Goodneſs, and encouraged in it, there are ſome whoſe *Order*, *Rank*, and *Circumſtances* in the World, will carry the Light of their good Works much farther, and by the more extenſive Influence, or at leaſt the greater Power and Weight of their Examples, may glorifie GOD more effectually, than ſuch as have not thoſe Advantages. Amongſt theſe I reckon,

(1.) *Princes* and *Great Men*, all whoſe Birth and Quality, Eſtate or Reputation, make them regarded above the general Level of Mankind. 'Tis evident by long Experience, that the Example of ſuch

as I have now mention'd, has force enough to bring either Vertue or Vice *into Faſhion.* Theſe are indeed a City ſet on an Hill, which cannot be hid; whatever good or ill they do, will be obſerv'd by every Body, and talk'd of far and near. And as 'tis impoſſible to *conceal* their moral Character, becauſe the Station they are in expoſes it whether they will or no, 'tis almoſt as impoſſible to defeat the Influence it is likely to have on the Morality of others. Whatever the *Prince* is, the Court will either be or ſeem to be, becauſe of their Dependance and Expectation from him. Whatever the *Court* is, the City and Country Gentlemen will be apt to imitate, and to endeavour to recommend themſelves by putting on the Courtiers Vertues or Vices. The Common-people look upon the *Nobility* and *Gentry*, who live amongſt them, as their Patterns, right or wrong, and by a natural Pride are prone to *value themſelves* upon doing as *they* do. It is therefore of exceeding great Conſequence, that theſe Men of Note and Figure ſhould ſet good Examples: For probably nothing of meer Human Means would tend more effectually to reform the Age, than ſuch Examples, general and continued, as 'tis certain the contra-

ry

ry tends more than any Thing to debauch it.

(2.) The *Clergy* in all Stations and Degrees, are peculiarly bound in *Decency* as well as *Duty*, to live up to what they preach. The World is ſo well ſatisfied in this, that the Clamour of their Countrey will aſſuredly follow them, if they do not; and nothing gives a more popular Scandal to Religion, than the vicious Lives of ſuch, as by their very Function and Office are ſent forth to be *Preachers* of Righteouſneſs. 'Tis true, that if they ſet an ill Example, it is no Excuſe for deſpiſing or neglecting the Holy Precepts, which, by Authority from Chriſt who ſends them, they deliver; for let them *live* as they will, yet if they give us from the Pulpit the true Faith and Doctrine of the Goſpel, what they preach, and not what they practiſe, is certainly the Rule by which we ſhall be judged for Eternity. Our Saviour has plainly taught us to diſtinguiſh thus, in his Remark upon the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*: *The Scribes and Phariſees ſit in Moſes Seat. All therefore whatſoever they bid you obſerve, that obſerve and do; but do not after their Works, for they ſay and do not.* Yet the Obligation upon the Chriſtian Clergy, to live up ſtrictly to Mat. 23. 2, 3.

their Doctrine, is as ſtrong as Scripture and Reaſon can make it. St. *Paul* charges *Timothy*, *'Be thou an Example of 'Believers, in Word, in Converſation, in Charity, in Faith, in Purity.* And St. *Peter* gives it, as a general Order to all Elders or Presbyters, that they ſhould be *Examples to the FLOCK, that when the chief Shepherd ſhall appear, they may receive a Crown of Glory, which fadeth not away.* As for their Obligation from *Reaſon*, there needs no other Argument for their *Exemplarineſs*, than that a Character for Vertue and Piety will be of mighty Advantage to them in the Diſcharge of one great Part of their Office, that of *Perſwaſion*; for no Man can be a good Preacher, who is not *remarkable* for a good Life and Converſation, a Reputation for Vertue being of great uſe to an Orator in gaining upon the Affections of any Auditory. *Virgil* makes the Authority of ſuch a Speaker, of Force enough to appeaſe the Anger of an enraged Multitude.

1 Tim. 4. 12.

1 Pet. 5. 3, 4.

Tum pietate gravem, ac meritis ſi forte virum quem
Conſpexere, ſilent, arrectiſq; auribus aſtant,
Ille regit dictis animos, & pectora mulcet.

(3.) Ano-

(3.) Another Order of Men, whom I reckon to be under ſpecial Obligations to an exemplary Life, is Magiſtrates; ſuch as by whatever Title are entruſted with the Execution of either the Civil or Eccleſiaſtical Laws of their Country. The Legal Puniſhment of Vice, ſo far as it falls within the laſh of Canon or Statute, is doubtleſs, as much a Part of their Buſineſs as any other. They are the *Miniſters of God, Revengers to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil,* ſent by him with this expreſs Commiſſion, *for the Puniſhment of Evil-doers, and for the Praiſe of them that do well.* If this be their Office, as it certainly is, ought not *they* in Point of *Honour* and *Juſtice,* to ſet Examples to thoſe they govern, of all thoſe Vertues which their Commiſſion ties them to protect and recommend? Rom. 13. 4.

(4.) *Parents* and *Maſters of Families* are peculiarly obliged, tho' their good Example be contracted within a narrower Obſervation, to let it ſhine as far as it can, for it may be of great Importance. *Children* from that natural Love implanted in them towards their Parents, are almoſt neceſſarily led to the Imitation of what they hear *them* ſay, and ſee *them* do. And Servants enured by the

conſtant Familiarity of every Days Attendance upon them, will be apt to take the ſtrongeſt Impreſſions from *their* Example, and to practiſe accordingly, when they ſet forward in the World themſelves. If a Parent or Maſter ſhews himſelf Pious and Vertuous in all his Converſation, 'tis to be hop'd, that all his Dependants will hereafter, in their ſeveral Families, purſue the ſame good Methods of keeping up Religion by daily Prayers, and reading of the Holy Scriptures, by a ſerious Obſervation of the Lord's Day, and bringing their Children and Servants conſtantly to Church, in which themſelves have been train'd up, and propagating it to late Poſterity.

There remains now only the Fourth General Head to be conſidered; and that is,

IV. *How we may be ſaid to glorifie God by our good Works.* God is Eſſential and Eternal Glory, to be himſelf is to be infinitely Glorious, and Glorious only from himſelf. His Juſtice, his Mercy, his Power, his Wiſdom, his Truth, his Unchangeableneſs, his every Attribute is a diſtinct and perpetual Ray, and ſuch an abundant Stream of Glory from his own Divine and Excellent Nature, as renders it

it impoſſible, for either Men or Angels in a ſtrict Senſe to glorifie him; that is, to add any new Honour or Luſtre to him, by any Thing they can ſay or do. But tho' we cannot make him more glorious than he is, we may *ſo declare his Glory* to our Fellow-Creatures both by our Words and Actions, as may make them more deeply ſenſible of it, and draw them to the like Acknowledgment and Admiration of him. And in this Senſe, I ſuppoſe it is, that we are ſo frequently enjoined to *glorifie God*, and to *do all to the Glory of God*. And we are told, not only in this Paragraph of our Saviour's Sermon, but in ſeveral other Places of the New Teſtament, that God is pleaſed to look upon himſelf as then eſpecially glorified by us, when by an Holy Converſation, fruitful in good Works, we imitate him, and live according to his Laws: *Herein is my Father glorified*, ſays Chriſt, *that ye bear much Fruit*. So St. *Paul* alſo, *Being fill'd with the Fruits of Righteouſneſs, which are by Chriſt Jeſus unto the Glory and Praiſe of God*. And St. *Peter* exhorts Chriſtians, ſo to behave themſelves amongſt the *Gentiles, That by their good Works which theſe ſhall behold, they may glorifie God in the Day of Viſitation*. Now God is glorified by

Rom. 15. 6. 1 Cor. 10. 13.

John 15. 8.

Phil. 1. 11.

1 Pet. 2. 12.

our good Works, or in other Terms, we do by our good Works ſet forth the Glory of God, and recommend him to the Veneration and Eſteem of our Fellow-Creatures.

(1.) As he is our *Creator.* He made Mankind in his own Image, and ſtamp'd upon him the Impreſſions of his own Holineſs, Goodneſs and Beneficence. By the Fall we became wretchedly degenerate, and loſt this Likeneſs to him in which we were created; but by the Aſſiſtance of his Grace given unto us in the New Covenant by Jeſus Chriſt, we are enabled in ſome Meaſure to recover it; and the more Holy our Converſations are, and the more Beneficent we are to others, the more honourably we repreſent our great Creator, whoſe Image we were made to bear. Whatever Goodneſs we have, muſt neceſſarily be derived from *him:* For the *Moral*, as well as natural Excellence of our Being, can be no more our own primary Act or Improvement, than our Being it ſelf. If ſo, the glorious God who made us muſt be infinitely Good, or he could not have communicated any Thing of Goodneſs to us. By our good Works therefore we repreſent, tho' imperfectly, the Goodneſs of God

God who has ſtamp'd his own Image upon us, and who has qualified us for, and incites us to the Practiſe of them. We glorifie God thereby, as we lead Men to the Conſideration of him, as the Fountain of every Excellence, the *Author of every good and perfect Gift*; the main Spring of all the Benefits which Men receive from *us*, from *one another*, or from the Miniſtration of any other Creature, as well as from the immediate Hand of his own Providence. But, James 1. 17.

(2.) By our Holy Converſation and good Works, we alſo ſet forth the Glory of God as our *Redeemer*, and *Law-giver*. We are expreſly told by St. *Paul*, what the Deſign of our Redemption was; Chriſt *gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purifie unto himſelf a peculiar People, zealous of Good-works.* And in another Place, that *we are created in Chriſt Jeſus unto Good-works, which God hath before ordained, that we ſhould walk in them.* Now when we anſwer the Deſign of our Redemption, and walk in that Order, and in the Practiſe of thoſe Things which are preſcribed to us thereupon, we may be ſaid to glorifie our Tit. 2. 14. Eph. 2. 10.

Redeemer, as we publicly juſtifie his Undertaking, acknowledge our ſelves to have been in a State of Miſery and Condemnation, confeſs the Neceſſity of his redeeming Love, and that the Method which he has appointed, is the only Way to be Safe and Happy. By our ready Compliance with him on his own Terms, we neceſſarily imply all this, and by embracing the ſtrict Conditions of Holineſs, purely at his Direction, againſt the Current of our ſenſual Appetites, our natural Paſſions, and our worldly Intereſts; we plainly declare our Eſteem and Veneration of him, we ſubſcribe to the Wiſdom of the Lawgiver, and to the Excellence of his Laws, and we recommend them by our Example to the Liking and Obedience of others, as Holy, Juſt and Good.

And thus it is, that by our good Works we glorifie God. We add no Glory to him, which he had not infinitely and eſſentially in himſelf before: But we declare his Glory to the World, and recommend him to the Love and Admiration of our Fellow-Creatures. Let us therefore, as we are bound by all the

the Ties of Gratitude and Duty to God, and by the Intereſt of our Eternal Hopes, ſo cauſe the *Light* of our Chriſtian and Holy Converſation *to ſhine before Men, that they ſeeing our good Works, may glorifie our Father which is in Heaven.*

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Of the Excellence of the Christian Morality above that of the Jews.

MATT. V. 17, 18, 19, 20.

Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and Earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled.

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least Commandments, and shall teach Men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven: But whosoever shall do, and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

For I say unto you, That except your Righteousness shall exceed the Righteousness of

of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

OUR blessed Saviour being now about to correct certain *Errors*, which were crept into the Morality of the *Jews*, to enforce some Duties, which were not before look'd upon as Obligatory, and to explain others which were not rightly understood, thought it necessary to usher in these Improvements with a Protestation, that he was *not come to destroy, but to fulfil the Law and the Prophets*; lest either the *Jews*, who were always jealous of any Innovations in their Law, should be prejudiced against, and offended at him, as derogating from their Institution; or lest his own Disciples should think, that because he gave them new Precepts, he made void their Obligation to the ancient Scriptural Morality. He therefore adds, *For verily I say unto you, till Heaven and Earth pass*, &c. as tho' he should say, "The Moral Law, "the Precepts of Piety, and Vertue, "which ye have received from *Moses* "and the Prophets, are of perpetual "Force, and your Obligation to them "can-

" cannot by any Means be diſſolved,
" till the World it ſelf, and all Things
" in it have an End. Whoſoever there-
" fore ſhall pretend a Liberty from my
" Inſtitution, to ſlight the leaſt of thoſe
" Commandments, and to teach Men
" that they may do ſo, will find him-
" ſelf in a fatal Error, for he ſhall ne-
" ver enter into that Eternal Glory,
" which is the Reward of pious and
" obedient Souls: But they, and they
" only, who adhere both in their Life
" and Doctrine to them, ſhall be recei-
" ved into the Kingdom of Heaven.
" For ſo far am I from abrogating any
" of thoſe Duties, and Vertues, which
" your Doctors teach you from that
" Law, that whatever they bid you ob-
" ſerve with regard thereto, I alſo re-
" quire you to obſerve and do; and not
" only ſo, but I tell you plainly, that
" ye have *much more* to practiſe than
" they teach you; and whoſoever from
" henceforward ſhall expect Eternal
" Happineſs, they muſt go beyond the
" *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, both in the
" Righteouſneſs of their Lives, and their
" Inſtructions too.

In farther explaining of this Paragraph, there will be no Neceſſity of enlarging upon the Meaning of theſe Words,

Think

Think not that I am come to deſtroy the Law and the Prophets, I am not come to deſtroy, becauſe they will be clearly and fully explained, from what will be ſaid on the two following Heads.

I. What muſt be here underſtood by our Saviour's *fulfilling* the Law and the Prophets.
II. In what Inſtances our Righteouſneſs muſt exceed the Righteouſneſs of the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*.

I. *What muſt be here underſtood by our Saviour's fulfilling the Law and the Prophets.* Our bleſſed Saviour may be ſaid to have fulfilled the Prophets, in that he accompliſhed all Things, which the Prophets foretold of him. Hence we meet with this Expreſſion frequently in the Evangeliſts, *That it might be fulfilled, which was ſpoken by the Prophets.* And he may be ſaid to have fulfilled the Law, in that he tranſgreſſed no one Commandment of the Law. For thus he ſpeaks of himſelf to the *Jews*, *Which of you convinceth me of Sin?* And thus to his Diſciples, *The Prince of this World cometh, and hath nothing in me.* But the meaning of his fulfilling the Law and the Prophets, in this Place, is according to the Senſe

John 8. 46.

John 14. 30.

Senſe of the Fathers and beſt Expoſitors, that he *compleated* and *perfected* the *Moral Law* delivered to the *Jews* by *Moſes* and the Prophets, refining upon the ſeveral Precepts of it, and extending them to ſuch a Compaſs of Obligation, as was either wanting or undiſcover'd there before. To clear this Matter, it will be requiſite to ſhew,

(1.) That the *Jewiſh Moral Law was not deſigned by God to be the laſt and moſt perfect Revelation of his Will: But that the farther Improvement and Perfection thereof, was reſerved for the Times of the Meſſiah.* Tho' the Almighty, to keep up the Knowledge of Himſelf as the only true God, call'd the Poſterity of *Jacob* to be his peculiar People; and to aſſert his Right of Government, delivered them a *Law* by *Moſes*, yet he dealt with them therein as a hard-hearted ſtubborn Race, receptive only of the outward Forms of Religion, but averſe to the ſpiritual and inward Subſtance of it. For this Reaſon their Law turn'd chiefly upon *pompous Ceremonies* and *external Obſervations*, that the Parade and Splendor of Idolatry in the Countries round them, might make the leſs Impreſſion upon the Fancy of a People, that knew not how to reliſh a plain and ſimple Way of Worſhip; and

and that the Mystical Prescriptions of *Heathenism* might not attract their Consciences, who were exceedingly enclined to Superstition. They had also several *Political* Constitutions laid down to regulate them as a separate State; and some few *Moral Precepts*: But these last so *sparingly* delivered, and in such *general Terms*, as shews they were only to lead the Way to a future and fuller Instruction, a compleater Revelation which should be made by the *Messiah*. For that such a Revelation more compleat and perfect was reserved for Christ, even *Moses*, their own great Law-giver, foretold, and charged them strictly with Obedience to it. *The Lord said unto me,* — *I will raise them up a Prophet from among their Brethren, like unto thee, and will put my Words in his Mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my Words, which he shall speak in my Name, I will require it of him.* This is expresly in the New Testament applied to Christ; and what is here said, that he should be *like unto* Moses, imports, that he should be a Law-giver to his People, as *Moses* was, the Author of a New Dispensation and Revelation of the Will of God. And the Excel-

Deut. 18. 17, 18, 19.

Acts 3. 22. Acts 7. 37.

Excellency of his Law is intimated in that Expreſſion, *I will put MY WORDS in his Mouth, and he ſhall ſpeak unto them ALL that I SHALL COMMAND him.* It's true, the Law of *Moſes* was the *Word of God*, and he delivered nothing but by *Command from him:* Yet as this Prophecy is moſt viſibly in the Intention of it, a *gracious* Promiſe, and a great Signification of the Divine Favour, as alſo a *ſecond* Inſtance of *extraordinary Revelation*, it muſt in Reaſon be ſuppoſed, to be more Perfect and Excellent than the former: For if it was not, if they had not ſufficient Inſtruction by the Law of *Moſes*, where would be the Benefit that ſhould make it the proper Subject of a Promiſe? If a ſecond Revelation be not more perfect than the firſt, there would be no need of it. And that this more perfect Revelation promiſed here by *Moſes*, and reſerved for that great Prophet whom he ſpeaks of, has Reference more eſpecially to the *Moral Law*, and to the Improvements that ſhould be made therein, appears from the declared *Occaſion* of making that Promiſe to the *Jews*. It is grounded upon the Terror that the People were under from the Thundrings and Lightnings, the ſound of the Trumpet, and other awful Signals of God's Preſence,

Deut. 18. 16.

ſence, when he ſpake to them from Mount *Horeb*, or *Sinai*, and their Deſire thereupon, that God would no more reveal himſelf in that dreadful manner to them. God approved their Requeſt, and promiſed he would for the future deliver his Commands by *Moſes*, and after him more fully by the Meſſiah. Now when was it that God ſo ſpake to them, and his Terrors made them ſo afraid, but when the *ten Commandments*, or the *Moral Law*, was delivered? Which plainly intimates that the Meſſiah ſhould in after Ages enlarge, explain, and perfect thoſe Commandments. I will therefore now proceed to ſhew,

Exod. 20. 18, 19.

(2.) That Chriſt did thus *improve the Moral Law of* Moſes, *and the Prophets*; and that,

1. As to the *Doctrinal* and *Preceptive* Part of it, in ſeveral Inſtances, which were either wanting in the former Diſpenſation, or at leaſt unknown and undiſcovered there, and not obligatory, till they were revealed by him in the Chriſtian Syſtem. For proof of this I ſhall need to have recourſe no farther than to his Sermon on the Mount, which is now under our Conſideration. And I ſhall but juſt name the Inſtances, becauſe they will be treated of more largely in their proper Place. The Third Command-

ment, which the *Jews* reſtrain'd to the Caſes of Blaſphemy and Perjury, he has extended to all prophane, and raſh or needleſs Swearing. The Sixth, againſt Murder, he has enlarged to a Prohibition of all cauſeleſs and immoderate Anger or Reſentments, tho' only cheriſh'd in the Breaſt; but if they proceed ſo far as to vent themſelves in paſſionate and reviling Language, he has repreſented to us what was before unknown, the Sinfulneſs and Danger thereof, with regard to the Puniſhments of another World: And the Neceſſity of Reconciliation with an offended Brother, in order to the Acceptance of our Prayers with God. Upon the Seventh Commandment, which the *Jews* thought concerned only the outward and compleat Acts of Lewdneſs, he has introduced an Interpretation, that makes the very looking upon a Woman with luſtful Fancy and Deſires, criminal. The Permiſſion of Divorce, which for the Hardneſs of their Hearts the Law of *Moſes* had indulged them, our Saviour has reſtrain'd to the Caſe of Fornication only, and reduced the ſacred Ties of Marriage to their original Strictneſs. Retaliation of Injuries had been allowed by the *Moſaical* Law; but Chriſt has here forbidden it, commands us to love our Ene-

Enemies, and to return Good for Evil. In these, and several other Precepts, which might be gathered out of this Sermon, and from other Parts of the Gospel, our Lord has raised the Duty of a Christian to such a Pitch of Excellence, as the *Jewish* Morality knew little or nothing of. But this was not all the Advantages he introduced above the Law of *Moses*: For,

2. He improved the Moral Law in respect of the *Sanction* also, the *Promises* and *Encouragements* annex'd to the Observance of it; *viz.* the *Assistance of the Holy Spirit of Grace*, the *full and free Remission of Sins*, the *Reward of Everlasting Life*, and the Penalty incurred by obstinate Disobedience, *eternal Misery in Hell*. The *Jews* had no such *Promises* made them of *Divine Assistance by the Holy Spirit*, to enable them to obey, as we thro' the Mercy of God in Christ abundantly enjoy under the Christian Law. Tho' it is not to be doubted, that all good Men amongst the *Jews* were enlightned and assisted by the Holy Spirit of God, for of our selves we can do nothing, and even bad Men restrained by the same Spirit from being worse: yet this was not the Matter of any *formal and explicit Promise* under that Dispensation, nor were those blessed Influences so freely, frequently, and

eminently poured out, as ſince the coming of our Saviour. *Remiſſion of Sins* was but ſparingly propoſed to them, at no ſmall Trouble and Expence in Sacrifices; and even this was ſtill but for Offences of a ſecond Rank. But there were many greater Evils, from which the criminal *Jew could not be juſtified by the Law of Moſes:* for in the twentieth Chapter of *Leviticus*, and elſewhere, we find Exciſion threatned to ſeveral Impieties, either by the immediate Hand of God, or by the Magiſtrate. In theſe Caſes the *Jew* had no Place left for Expiatory Sacrifices, tho' God might nevertheleſs, where true Repentance intervened, be merciful to him in another World, through the intended future Sacrifice of Chriſt. And to this after-Diſpenſation by Chriſt, was reſerved that general and public Promiſe of Pardon for all Sins, even Blaſphemy it ſelf, except the Blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt. This our Saviour himſelf proclaimed while he was on Earth, and commanded his Apoſtles alſo, that *Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins ſhould be preached in his Name amongſt all Nations, beginning at Jeruſalem*; who accordingly publiſhed this great Advantage of the Goſpel wherever they came, declaring, that *all who believe are juſtified* by Chriſt *from all things*

Mat. 12. 31. Luke 24. 47.

Acts 13. 39.

from

from which they could not be justified by the Law of Moses. Again, what *Moses* and the Prophets *promised to the Jews for their Obedience*, was only with regard to this present Life; a long and happy Establishment in the Land of *Canaan*, the outward Blessings of Providence, Health and Riches, a numerous Posterity, a fruitful Soil, a flourishing and prosperous State. And what they *threatned upon Disobedience*, was only Oppression from their Enemies, Captivity, a temporal Death, and other things contrary to the Rewards just mentioned. But the Gospel Rewards and Punishments are of infinitely greater Consequence, even *eternal Life and Happiness in Heaven*, or *everlasting Misery in Hell.* It was Christ *who brought Life and Immortality to light through the Gospel.* He clear'd the Doctrine of the Resurrection both by Arguments and Instances, by raising others from the Dead, and rising again himself. He repeated and confirm'd the Promises of it in plainer Expressions, revealed the future Judgment, and described the State of the Just and Unjust which should follow thereupon, as far as was any ways necessary to guard the Observance of his Precepts, to excite Men to Piety and Virtue, by the Assurance of a Crown of never fading Glory, Joy,

and Peace in Heaven, to the Obedient; and deter Men from the Love and Practice of Sin by the most dreadful and perpetual Punishments that will attend it in another World. And by all this added a Strength and Sanction to the Christian Law, very far above that of the Jewish.

3. And lastly, He improved it in the *Extent and Compass of its Jurisdiction*, or the Number of Subjects under the Obligation of it. The Law of *Moses* was given but to one particular Nation, and demanded not Obedience from any other, except those few religious Foreigners who should from time to time become voluntary Proselytes. The rest of the World were left to live by the Dictates of meer natural Conscience, and the dim Light of Reason, sometimes improved, but oftner perplex'd by the various and uncertain Schemes of Philosophy. But the Church of God, which for so many Ages was confined to a little Corner of the Earth, the Land of *Canaan*, was to be extended to all Nations without distinction, when the Messiah should appear. His Law was to be universal, and to oblige the whole Race of Mankind. And no Law could be better fitted for that purpose: The whole Burden of Ceremonies being laid aside, the Institution of Christ is such as

flows

flows from natural and eternal Right, is agreeable to the Reaſon and Capacity of all Mankind, a plain and practicable Inſtitution, and the fitteſt of any that could be contrived to ſuit with all the various Circumſtances of thoſe that are to be governed by it, and to make all Societies, under what Political Form ſoever, ſafe and happy in the due Obſervance of it. This Revelation therefore was in its own nature too great, too general a Bleſſing to be engroſſed by any one particular People. 'Twas adapted to the Good of *all*, and *all who would* ſhould have the Benefit of it: For ſo the Prophets long before Chriſt came had propheſied: *Behold my Servant, whom I uphold*, ſays God, *mine Elect, in whom my Soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him, he ſhall bring forth Judgment to the Gentiles. He ſhall not fail nor be diſcouraged till he have Judgment in the Earth, and the Iſles ſhall wait for his Law.* Accordingly the Apoſtles of Chriſt were ſent by him with a general Commiſſion to preach the Goſpel *in all Nations*, not only in *Jeruſalem*, and in all *Judea*, and in *Samaria*, but unto the *uttermoſt Part of the Earth.* And this, bleſſed be God, we find in a great part accompliſhed, and wait for the more compleat Accompliſhment thereof, when the

Iſa. 42. 1, 4.

Luke 24. 47.

Acts 1. 8.

Rom. 11. 25. *Fulneſs of the Gentiles ſhall come in.* Having now diſcharged my ſelf of the firſt general Head, and ſhewn you, that by our Saviour's fulfilling the Law and the Prophets, is here meant his perfecting the *Moral Law*, which not only needed, but expected ſuch an Improvement from the *Meſſiah*, and actually receiv'd it, as ye have ſeen in many Particulars; I muſt now direct your Thoughts to conſider,

II. In what Inſtances our Righteouſneſs muſt exceed the Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees.

(1.) We muſt go upon a right *Bottom* and *Foundation of Practice*; we muſt not miſtake, and do unrighteous things for righteous. The Scribes and Phariſees, notwithſtanding that they were Teachers of the Law of God, were notoriouſly under this fundamental Error, they *truſted in themſelves that they were righteous*, pretended not only *more than others*, but even *excluſively of others* to that excellent Character; and yet the Zeal, which *they* made ſuch a Figure with, was but ſo much the greater a Violation of the true Righteouſneſs, becauſe they miſtook in the Application of it; under a falſe Idea of *ſerving God* they *perſecuted the Son of God*, and with the utmoſt Bitterneſs rejected

jected the only true Religion, for Religion's ſake. St. *Paul* alſo, while he continued a Phariſee, did the ſame, ſuppoſing himſelf the more righteous for his Severity againſt the Chriſtians; for, ſays he, *I verily thought with my ſelf, that I OUGHT to do many things contrary to the Name of Jeſus of Nazareth.* And ſo he teſtifies of his Countrymen the *Jews* in general, that they had *a Zeal for God, but not according to Knowledge.* It was an ignorant Zeal, and wrong grounded, miſtaking Evil for Good, and Good for Evil. 'Tis eaſy to diſcern how fatal ſuch a Miſtake muſt be, and that the greater Progreſs Men make in ſuch a ſort of Righteouſneſs, the farther they are wandering from the true Way to Heaven. But the Scribes and Phariſees are not the only Bigots that have been thus miſtaken. The Hiſtories of the Church, and the Experience of late and preſent Ages can ſhew, that the ſame Spirit of Deluſion has poſſeſs'd too many *Chriſtians*, who having firſt been drawn aſide into Errors of the greateſt Conſequence, have under the Notion of Righteouſneſs, not only obſtinately defended and improved thoſe Errors, but furiouſly preſs'd them upon others, imagining all this while, that by Inhumanity they were doing God good Service. Others there are, who,

Acts 26. 9.

Rom. 10. 2.

who, having cheriſh'd in themſelves many weak and unreaſonable Scruples, have wrought their Minds to ſuch an acquired Blindneſs, as to make a *Duty* of a *notorious Sin*, and maintain *Schiſm* and *Diſorder*, even by Dint of *Conſcience*. It is of the utmoſt moment therefore, that we ſhould guard againſt ſuch dreadful Miſtakes, and be ſure that what we do under the Suppoſition of Righteouſneſs, be *really* ſuch according to the Rule of Righteouſneſs which God has given us.

(2.) The *Deſign* and *End* of our good Actions muſt be righteous alſo; for where this is wanting, there is a Defect in the very Life and Subſtance of the Duty. Where the *Intention* is indirect, and what we do is but the Iſſue of ſome ſecret Schemes for Reputation or ſecular Intereſt, there may be *Policy* in it, but there is no *Religion*; our Righteouſneſs is no better than that of the Scribes and Phariſees. For theſe, our Saviour tells us, did all their Good Works purely to be ſeen of Men: They prayed, and faſted, and gave Alms, but it was to gain them Applauſe among the People, that they might be publicly taken notice of with the higheſt Reſpect on all Occaſions, and by this affected Sanctity make a Property of their devout but ignorant Admirers. The

Mat. 23. 5, 6, 7.

Pro-

Project was to raiſe their Credit and their Fortunes, and therefore it was their Buſineſs to *appear righteous outwardly unto Men*, tho' *within they were full of Hypocriſy and Iniquity.* But the ſame Woes, which upon this very account were with ſo much Earneſtneſs pronounced, even by the meek and merciful Saviour of the World, againſt Them, are equally level'd againſt Us, if we take not care to excel them in this material Article, the Sincerity of thoſe Principles, by which we do Righteouſneſs. *A good Man out of the good Treaſure of the HEART brings forth good things*, ſays Chriſt; repreſenting to us thereby the Neceſſity of a ſincere and righteous Mind, to the Production of good and righteous Practices: For however otherwiſe the Appearance may be plauſible to the World, and the Effect of it viſible and uſeful, as the Alms of a Phariſee may be a true Relief to the Poor; yet if the Deſign, which is the Act of the Heart, be vicious and irregular, the whole Action is ſinful, and the Diſguiſe and Varniſh of it ſerves only to aggravate the Guilt of the Actor. But then, Mat. 12. 35.

(3.) In reſpect of the *Degree* and *Meaſure* of our Righteouſneſs, it muſt have a much more generous Compaſs than that

that of the Scribes and Phariſees, it muſt be an *impartial* and *univerſal* Righteouſneſs. Let us not think it enough, when we are exact in ſome things, and negligent in others; let us not ſit down contented with the firſt and more eaſy Attainments and imperfect Efforts in Religion, with having ſet out well, and made ſome little Progreſs in it, or with a formal Uſe of certain Means and Inſtruments of Righteouſneſs; but graſp at every Vertue, and preſs forward to Perfection in the Extent of each Particular. And here I might enlarge upon the idle and imperfect Religion of ſeveral ſorts of People, who never conſidering to what ſevere Precepts they are obliged, and what a perfect Example they are to imitate, and what mighty Aids and Aſſiſtances are offered them, and what great Rewards are propoſed to them; content themſelves with low and common Meaſures, ſuch as meer Nature would teach them, and ſuch as no way anſwer the Prophecies and Deſcriptions of that Age of Righteouſneſs, which the Meſſiah, the laſt and great Prophet, came to inſtruct. But I will content my ſelf with a few Inſtances.

Firſt, There are ſome who think it ſufficient, that they are a *little more civilized than the profane and profligate World about*

about them. Thus we find the vain-glorious Phariſee valuing himſelf, and dreſſing up his own Character, as he thought, to the beſt advantage, upon this, that he was better than the generality of Men, that he was no Extortioner, not unjuſt, nor lewd and debauched, as many others were; and yet he was far ſhort of what he ſhould have been, he was weighed in the Ballance, and found wanting: For the poor Publican, being a ſincere and thorough Penitent, went home accepted by God, when the other did not. I doubt we have a great number of Chriſtians, who can make no better Pretence to the Favour of God, than this *Phariſee* here, yet entertain a vain Conceit of their being religious *enough*, becauſe they are more regular and decent in their Character than notoriouſly bad Men are. 'Tis a good Rule, that we ſhould never compare our ſelves with thoſe that are *worſe*, but with ſuch as are *better* than our ſelves: The former Compariſon will fill us only with Pride; but the latter will ſhew us our Defects, and teach us to improve.

Secondly, There are ſome who ſatisfy themſelves with the Obſervance only of the *moſt obvious and literal Senſe of ſeveral Precepts.* Whatever the Caſe of the

Jews

Jews was in reſpect of this, the Goſpel of Chriſt has taught us a more *extenſive* Obedience. So that it is not enough now that we abſtain from Murder and Adultery, from Theft and falſe Accuſation, and the like plain and viſible Acts of Violence and Wickedneſs; but we muſt likewiſe lay aſide all Envy, and Spite, and Bitterneſs, and Evil-ſpeaking, every unclean and brutiſh Imagination, and the very Love and Deſire of Evil. For if we indulge our ſelves in theſe, tho' we abſtain from the groſſer Actions, we are far from the Meaſure of the Chriſtian Righteouſneſs.

Thirdly, There are others who *rely upon a preſent good Senſe and Diſpoſition of Mind*, expreſſing it ſelf in Sorrow and Contrition, together with Reſolutions of better Obedience; but yet upon the whole matter, are no better than before, never bringing forth the Fruit of godly Sorrow, which is Amendment. That they are ſorry for what they have done, ſhews that they have done amiſs; and if they go ſo far as to make good Reſolutions, 'tis ſtill in order to do better; but if theſe Reſolutions come to nothing, 'tis certain that flaſhy Repentance of theirs will be of no ſervice to them.

There

There are, *Fourthly*, another ſort of Men, who *reſt only in the common Means and Helps of Righteouſneſs*, who read much, and hear frequently, and pray often, which are all profitable Means, and recommended to our Uſe, not only as the Inſtruments of obtaining good things, but alſo as the Methods of acknowledging and reverencing Almighty God, and paying to him that Obedience and Praiſe which he requires of us. But yet how many have miſcarried even here? I do not ſay by the too frequent Exerciſes of Devotion, but the depending upon them, as if there was nothing more to be done. Whereas in truth, ſo far as they are really *Acts* of Worſhip and Obedience to God, they are ſtill but Parts of Righteouſneſs, and not the whole: But taking them (as Reading and Hearing more eſpecially are) as *Methods* appointed by God *for our Inſtruction in Righteouſneſs*, it is not the bare Uſe of, and Attendance upon theſe, without the due Effects of ſuch Inſtructions for perſuing practically thoſe Directions for an holy Life, which they ſupply us with, that can denominate us righteous. And even Prayer it ſelf, tho' it is indeed an Act of Worſhip, and ſo a Part of our Religion, is alſo a Means appointed, as other Means are, for our Ad-

Advance in Righteouſneſs; and ſo we are only to reckon Men righteous in the Uſe of it, as it has that Influence and Effect upon them: For when Men pray much and often, and yet live diſhoneſtly and viciouſly in the World, they are no more to be called righteous, than Men are to be eſteem'd healthful, that uſe much Phyſick, when they languiſh all the time under a viſible Infirmity.

But, in the *Fifth* and laſt place, there are others who *pick and chuſe out* ſome particular Duties or Vertues, wherein they will be very exact, and fancy God Almighty will excuſe them as to all the reſt. Thus taught the Scribes and Pha-
Mat. 23. 2. riſees, *who ſat in Moſes Seat*, and were the received Interpreters of the Law of God amongſt the *Jews*; they laid a mighty ſtreſs upon the Religion of ſome one Precept, to the neglect of others; and only differed in their Opinion *which* Precept ſhould be ſo recommended, as appears by that Queſtion of the *Jewiſh*
Mat. 23. 36. Doctor, *Which is the great Commandment in the Law?* And our Saviour accordingly in his Anſwer ſums up the *whole Law*, the Love of God and of our Neighbour, to obviate the Miſtake, and ſhew that one Part of the Law as well as another demands our faithful Obedience. We

muſt

must take the whole Law of God before us, and have respect unto all his Commands. We ought to consider 'em as the Commands of God, whose Authority is equally impressed upon all as upon any one. For, says St. *James*, *He that said*, *Do not commit Adultery*, *said also*, *Do not kill*. He therefore who abstains from the one, in conscience of the Authority of the Imposer, should for that reason abstain from the other also, otherwise he does not do it in obedience to God. Some Virtues are easy to some Mens Temper and Constitution, or they have been fix'd in them by Education; or the Eyes of Men, and the Rewards of the World, and the Power of Laws, are so many Encouragements to the Practice of them. And from hence it comes to pass, that Men are many times severe and superstitious in some things, and yet very careless and negligent in others. They can govern one Passion, but not another; they will not be revengeful, but must be allow'd to be intemperate; or they can bridle their Appetites, but not their Tongue; or they dare venture to cheat and bear false witness, tho' they will not kill: And so they perform only an imperfect and partial Righteousness, the Principle of Obedience not being the Spring and Jam. 2. 11.

Fountain of their Religion. Others, as if they were ſtill Diſciples of the Scribes and Phariſees rather than of Chriſt, are very nice and punctual in little things of leſs Concernment, and think by that to atone for ſolid and ſubſtantial Vertues. We find it charged upon thoſe whom our Saviour aſſures us we muſt excel in Goodneſs, or be undone for ever, that they were exact in paying Tythe, even of the ſmalleſt Products, *Mint*, *Anniſe*, and *Cummin*, while they ſhamefully forgot the *weightier Matters of the Law*, *Judgment*, *Mercy* and *Faith*; but our Saviour well determines upon it, *Theſe ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.* The ſmaller Matters of Religion, the Ceremonies, the outward Circumſtances, and every Injunction of it, ought to be carefully obſerved; but ſurely the Argument holds much ſtronger for the Obſervance of ſuch Precepts as tend to inward and univerſal Holineſs. There is no Compoſition to be expected, we muſt be good to the utmoſt of our Power in every thing, or like the corrupt defective Scribes and Phariſees, we ſhall never enter into the Kingdom of God.

Mat. 23. 23.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Of cauſeleſs Anger, and of ſcornful and cenſorious Language.

MATT. V. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26.

Ye have heard, that it was ſaid by them of old Time, Thou ſhalt not kill: And whoſoever ſhall kill, ſhall be in danger of the Judgment.

But I ſay unto you, That whoſoever is angry with his Brother without a Cauſe, ſhall be in danger of the Judgment: And whoſoever ſhall ſay to his Brother, Raca, *ſhall be in danger of the Council: But whoſoever ſhall ſay, Thou Fool, ſhall be in danger of Hell-fire.*

Therefore if thou bring thy Gift to the Altar, and there remembreſt that thy Brother hath ought againſt thee;

Leave there thy Gift before the Altar, and go thy Way, firſt be reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy Gift.

Agree with thine Adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the Way with him: Lest at any Time the Adversary deliver thee to the Judge, and the Judge deliver thee to the Officer, and thou be cast into Prison.

Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost Farthing.

UR Lord having in the former Paragraph declared, that such as would be his Disciples, must practise a more excellent and refined Morality, than the *Jewish* Doctors taught, and carry the Precepts and Prohibitions of the Law of God beyond the then received Interpretations of them, proceeds to give an Instance in the Matter of the Sixth Commandment. The *Jews* understood by it, no more than what the Letter of the Precept forced them to acknowledge, a Prohibition from *Murder*, but he extends it to the forbidding of all such ill-govern'd Passions, and provoking Behaviour, as were the *Principles*, and might move the *Occasions* of Murder. Let us suppose our Saviour to have express'd himself after the following Manner.

" Mur-

" Murder ye know to be forbidden
" by the Law under the Pain of Death,
" the Judgment usually inflicted for such
" a Crime. But the Commission of Mur-
" der, and the actual shedding of Blood,
" is far from being all that is restrained by
" this Commandment. For I, who am
" sent from Heaven as an Authentic In-
" terpreter of the Divine Laws, declare to
" you, that whosoever indulges himself
" in *rash*, *unreasonable* or *excessive Anger*,
" is in the Eye of God guilty of a *Ca-*
" *pital Crime*. And whosoever proceeds
" farther, to *scornful* and *contemptuous*
" *Language*, is still a *more heinous* Offen-
" der, and worthy of a *more severe* Pu-
" nishment than an ordinary Death, e-
" ven as a Council uses to be held a-
" mongst you for the Punishment of *no-*
" *torious* Malefactors, when the com-
" mon Methods of Justice are thought
" too mild and gentle for their Crimes.
" And he who gives his Tongue the Li-
" berty of *Reviling*, is still *more odious*
" to God, and worthy of the most dread-
" ful Severities, that can be inflicted
" upon him. If therefore, when you
" come to pay your Devotions to Al-
" mighty God, ye remember, ye have
" been in any of these Kinds injurious to
" your Neighbour, go first and recon-

" cile your ſelves to him, and then re-
" turn and finiſh your Devotions, which
" then, and not till then, will be accep-
" table. Make up the Matter in Time
" with your Adverſary, whileſt it may
" be made up, before the Cauſe comes
" to be heard, leſt being caſt ye be com-
" mitted to Priſon, from whence ye muſt
" not expect to be releaſed without ſuf-
" fering the utmoſt Rigour of the Law,
" whatever it be.

In explaining of this Paragraph farther, I will not trouble you with a critical Account of the three Degrees of Puniſhment, referred to in *verſe* 22. It will be enough to obſerve, that by ſuch an Alluſion our Saviour ſignifies to us, that even *cauſeleſs Anger* is a Sin, *contemptuous Language* a greater, and *cenſorious Reviling* yet worſe; and that accordingly a Puniſhment proportionable to the Degrees of Guilt, is reſerved for each of theſe by the Judgment of God, as well as for the groſſer Acts of Murder. The Precept therefore, as it is here refined upon and enlarged, extends,

I. To the moderating of Anger.
II. To the reſtraining all ſcornful and contemptuous Language, and all ſlanderous and vile Reflections.

III.

III. To the obliging us, when we have done an Injury, to repair it as well as we can, and to solicite a Reconciliation as soon as is possible.

Let us consider these distinctly.

I. I begin with the first, the *Rules to be observed for duly moderating our Anger.* It was never the Design of the Christian Religion to *root out* Human Passions; they being essential to our very Nature, we are not Men without them, but to reduce them to their true Use, and confine them within due Bounds. The Motions of Fear and Love, of Joy and Grief, of Complacency and Anger, are not evil in *themselves*, but *as we use them:* Let them be governed by the Law of God, and by the Rules of Reason, and they are as innocent as any other Faculty of the rational Soul, and every way as subservient and necessary to the Ends of Vertue. But if we let them loose, they will certainly drive us before them, as their Slaves, to all Manner of Sin and Extravagance, then the Law of God will be trampled upon, Reason will be overborn, the Peace of our own Minds, and the good Order of all about us will be destroy'd. It is highly requisite, therefore, to keep a strait Rein upon our Pas-

sions, that we may govern *them*, and not they *us*; which, in the Case I am now particularly speaking of, I suppose to be the Meaning of St. *Paul*'s Advice, Eph. 4. 6. *Be ye angry, and sin not.* He suggests indeed, that there is something of *Difficulty* in being *angry* and *innocent* together; because the Corruptions of our Nature have given our Passions that command over us, which nothing but the Grace of God, and our own vigorous Endeavours can restrain; yet certainly, he supposes it to *be possible*, or else the Direction would be absurd. And that we *may* thus preserve our Innocence, it concerns us carefully to look to it, that the *Cause*, the *Measure*, and the *Continuance* of our Anger be under due Prescription.

(1.) First then, we must not be angry *without a great and just Provocation.* I take it for granted, that there are warrantable Causes of Anger, and that Anger is not forbidden where the Occasions are just. But since it is natural to us all, when we are moved to think, with peevish *Jonah*, that *we do well to be angry*; let us consider a little, what those Occasions are, which really *will* or *will not*, justifie our being so. One Rule I am sure we may depend upon, that *whatever*

Resent-

Resentments proceed from PRIDE, or from exorbitant SELF-LOVE, are utterly unlawful; for these are Principles corrupt and vicious in themselves, and *who can bring a clean Thing out of an unclean?* And hence we must conclude against all Resentments of *Neglect, Contradiction, personal Contempt*, and other the like Affronts, whether real or imaginary: Except where the Authority of a Parent, a Master, or a Magistrate is insulted; and then indeed for the sake of natural Reverence and political Order, Contempts become just Occasions of Anger, and ought to be resented. But when the Offence is meerly personal (especially if the Importance of it is not great) Humility and Meekness ought to govern, and all should be pass'd by with a generous Disregard, or softned by Christian Charity. I am sensible, how hard it is for an angry Man to perswade himself, that this, or that particular Occasion (be it what it will) that moves him, has all its Force and Inflamation from *his own Pride*, or excessive Tenderness of himself. The *Heart is deceitful above all Things*, and will frame a thousand Excuses to screen its own Corruption; but what else is it owing to, that Men take Fire so presently, if a piece of Re-

spect

spect to them happen (with or without Design) to be omitted. If one whom they fancy to be an Inferior (and whom will not a proud Person think so?) step before them, or place himself above them; if a Word or two be dropt in Conversation, that seems to reflect upon them; if all they say be not entirely credited, or all their Notions complied with, and all they do approved; How many Contempts, tho' real perhaps, yet trifling, are resented, which ought much rather to be despised! And which is worse, how angry will some Men be when they are *told of their Faults*, tho' in a mild and prudent Way, and only from a kind Intention of reclaiming them. Now what are all these and other Resentments of this kind, but the Issue of Mens Pride, and undue Value of themselves? Every Body will allow it so in another's Case, how hardly soever he is brought to believe it in his own. And therefore *Anger upon such Grounds* must be irregular and unjustifiable. As to the Matter of *real* and *considerable Injuries*, I do not say, 'tis altogether unlawful to be moved by them; but the less we are so, the better: For there is nothing more insisted on in the Christian Religion, than Patience and Meekness, even on

these

these Occasions. The only Anger that is *without question* warrantable (beside what I took Notice of above, in the Case of a just Authority insulted or contemned) is that which arises from a good Man's *Love of God*, and *Detestation of Sin*. When he hears the Holy Name of God blasphemed or trifled with; his Holy Word prophaned; his Being, his Providence, or his Truths denied; lewd Language or indecent Jests delivered; or uncharitable Reflections vented against an innocent Neighbour; when he sees the Divine Laws trampled upon, Religion scandalized, Debauchery and Vice prevailing: Then indeed *he does well to be angry*: His Lord and Master, upon whom he depends for his daily Bread in this Life, and his Eternal Happiness hereafter, is affronted; and who that has a Sense of Piety and Gratitude can bear it? *Sin* we are not only allowed, but *required to hate*, and therefore, tho' we commiserate the *Sinner*, we may and must be angry at *his Sin*. Thus much for the *Causes* of Anger, let us now see how it is to be governed, with respect to the *Measure* or *Degree*.

(2.) Our second Rule therefore must be this, that our Anger be not *greater than the Offence deserves*. We must carefully

fully confine it within such Bounds, that it may not exceed the *Merits of the Cause*: For so far as it exceeds *them*, so far it is *without Cause*; and therefore unreasonable and unchristian. I confess, there is no measuring out our Resentments by Grains and Scruples, in an *exact* Proportion to every Accident that excites them: But there must be such a general Regulation, as that it shall not be in the Power of *trifling and small Offences* to create in us a *great Uneasiness*; nor of *any Offence at all*, to blow us up into *Storms* and *Tempests*. Indeed, were we to judge of the Importance of Things by the Weight they ordinarily make upon the Spring of Men's Passions, it would be hard to fix upon any Accident, how minute soever, that would be allowed to pass for a Trifle. Nay, even those Things that really are of moment, and will justifie some greater Roughness, do so easily hurry us into Extreams, that there will need much Grace and much Philosophy, and constant Watchfulness to temper and restrain our Heat. Even *Zeal for God*, when it degenerates into Fierceness and Fury, becomes unwarrantable; and how great soever any personal Provocation, or private Injury may be, there are Degrees of Anger, that

that are absolutely, and at all Times unlawful. Revenge is one of these (of which I shall have Occasion to say more hereafter in another Chapter) and the other is, what we properly enough by way of Emphasis call *Passion*; which beside the apparent Danger it brings to such as fall in our Way, or are about us during that Extravagancy, is also disgraceful to human Nature, carries us out of our selves, to do and say what shamefully betrays our Weakness, and renders us *contemptible*, instead of making us *considerable*.

But farther,

(3.) Another Rule whereby we ought to govern our Anger is, *That we are not to retain it longer than Reason requires.* And it is retained longer than Reason requires, if it continue after the Fault is acknowledged or amended, Pardon asked, or due Satisfaction given or offered. Or supposing the Offence was trivial, if it continue any longer, than while we are under the first Surprise, that is, if it continue after such Time, wherein we might recollect our selves, and so compose and settle our Minds; there is nothing more contrary to Christianity, than to be implacable and morose, even after just Cause of Anger, and so our Saviour

viour suggests in his Answer to St. *Peter*'s Question, *Lord, how oft shall my Brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven Times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven Times; but, until seventy Times seven*, viz. So often forgive him, as he repents of what he hath done. And so we learn from those other Words, *If thy Brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven Times in a Day, and seven Times in a Day turn again to thee; saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.* Where our Lord gives a special Caution, that our Anger do not remain with us a Day, an Hour, nay, a Minute longer than there is just Reason for it, as knowing how dangerous a Passion it is, how apt to grow rankerous and inveterate; and how much Advantage the great Tempter hath against us. And this is that which St. *Paul* suggests, *Be Angry and sin not, let not the Sun go down upon your Wrath, neither give Place to the Devil.*

Matt. 18. 21, 22.

Luke 17. 3, 4.

Eph. 4. 26.

II. The Second Article in which our Saviour has improved the Sixth Commandment, is the extending it to restrain all *scornful* and *contemptuous Reviling*, and *censorious Language*. These are in-

indeed the Effects of Anger, which too generally shews it self this Way; and therefore if Anger, considered only as an inward Resentment, or as expressed in certain Over-acts, tho' short of these, must be restrained and moderated by the Rules given under the former Head; there is no room to doubt, but that such exorbitant Efforts of it, as we are now to speak of, must be yet more heinous in themselves, more deeply offensive to God, and more carefully to be avoided by every Christian. The Word *Raca* is used to signifie an empty, witless, or contemptible Fellow; and the Word *Fool* does usually represent to us in the Scripture Language, a *dissolute* or *wicked Man.* And so I take the meaning of this Part of the Paragraph to be, that Words of Reproach and Contempt, add very much to the guilt of sinful Anger. But *slanderous Reviling*, as calling a Man an *impious Wretch*, and the like, is yet a more grievous Offence, and will accordingly be punished. Harsh Words of *any kind* are to be very sparingly used, not without a great deal of Caution and Discretion, where just Authority corrects, and where it may serve the Ends of Vertue. But such harsh *Words* as *these* must never come from us, but under the strictest Regulations of Tem-

Temper, Intention and Truth. My meaning is, they are never to be the *Effects of Passion*, never uttered maliciously to *depreciate* and *expose* Men, and never apply'd without the most sensible and certain Evidence. It is not the *using* of such Words *in any Account whatsoever* that is here forbidden, but when the use of them proceeds from *causeless* or *immoderate Anger*, and from Principles of Spleen and Malice. St. *James* makes use of the Expression, *O Vain Man*, which is no other than the *English* of *Raca*; and our Saviour himself speaking to the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, *Ye Fools and Blind*, and frequently calls them *Hypocrites*. From which we may certainly draw this Conclusion, that when those whose Office and Authority it is to reprove or to instruct, think fit to express themselves in such Words, and do it out of a truly charitable Intention, and in a calm and serious Manner, by representing thus to the Consciences of those they speak to, the Folly and Wickedness of a sinful Course, and shewing them their own just Character, where Sharpness may be likely to do good; 'tis no Offence at all against this Precept. But when it is done meerly to expose and ridicule, to vex and exasperate, to vent our Anger, or to gratifie our Pride, it is a most unchristian

James 2. 20.

Matt. 23. 17, 19.

chriſtian Practice. But let us a little more particularly conſider,

(1.) The Sin of *Scoffing* and *Deriſion*, thoſe *Arrows*, as the Pſalmiſt calls them, *even bitter Words*, ſmooth'd over with an Air of Mirth, and feather'd with an Affectation of Wit; but pointed with ill Nature, and drawn to the Head with all the Strength of Inſolence and Malice. And how many are there, that value themſelves for being excellent Marksmen in this Way? While they little think of thoſe *Judgments* that are *prepared for Scorners*, when the malicious Laugh ſhall be quite over with them, and the dreadful Hour ſhall come, which will make them ſerious, whether they will or no. Their Behaviour is doubtleſs *very diſpleaſing to God*, who deſires the Good Agreement, Peace and Comfort of all his rational Creatures, and has ſet the meaneſt of them above Contempt, by that ineſtimable Price paid for their Redemption, the Death and Sufferings of his Son. And it is *very provoking to thoſe that are abuſed by it*, no Sting piercing deeper, or cauſing greater Smart and Inflamation in the Minds of Men, than ſcornful Language and Ridicule. As the Buſineſs of this is to leſſen them in the Eſteem of their Neighbours, and

to render them deſpicable where they live; and as the Event does uſually anſwer the vile Deſign of it, it becomes a *real Injury* to the Perſons ſo reproached, and conſequently is a great *Injuſtice* to them. And as the Things for which Men are uſually derided, are either the Defects of their Underſtanding, the Deformity of their Bodies, or the Poverty of their Fortunes, it is alſo barbarous and inhuman, nay, abſurd and impious. 'Tis reproaching them for what they cannot help, 'tis loading them with *Scorn* for what deſerves our Pity; 'tis either ſuppoſing them *to have made themſelves*, (for elſe their natural Defects in Mind or Body, could not be imputed to them as a Reproach;) or blaſphemouſly *reflecting upon God* who did *create them*, and finding Fault with the Workmanſhip and Order of Divine Providence, which for Reaſons far above our Cenſure, has thought fit to make a Difference in Mens Underſtandings, Shape and other Circumſtances. The Deſign of this, ſo far as *we* can dive into it, is to exerciſe our Compaſſion one towards another, and to preſent continual Objects for our good Nature to ſupport, and Charity to relieve. But this is impiouſly perverted, if inſtead of comforting, pitying and aſ-

ſiſting,

sisting, we triumph in their Sorrows, sport with their Defects, and play upon their Misfortunes. God resents this as striking at Himself, for he has declared, That *whoso mocketh the Poor, reproacheth his Maker; and he that is glad at Calamities, shall not be unpunished.* And how great the Punishment is that threatens them, we may learn from the Prophetical Curses uttered against them by the Psalmist inspired by God, and recorded in Scripture for our Terror. *Pour out thine Indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful Anger take hold of them. Let their Habitation be desolate, and let none dwell in their Tents.* And for what Cause? *For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded.* And therefore, says he, *Add Iniquity to their Iniquity: And let them not come into thy Righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the Book of the Living, and not be written with the Righteous.* I must add here, that not only *derisive Words*, but all such *Actions* and *Behaviour* as are of the same tendency, must by Parity of Reason be reduced under the same Prohibition. For *Actions* have a Language as effectual as any Words, and sometimes more expressive. All scornful Looks therefore, and

Prov. 17. 5.

Psalm 69. 24, &c.

all Gestures of Contempt and Mocking, all wilful Affronts in our Carriage, all designed and evident Neglects, and whatever may seem to trample upon our Neighbour, and is visibly intended to *lessen* and *ridicule* him, cannot but be equally hurtful to the Sufferer, and equally odious both to God and Man.

(2.) *Censorious Railing* or *Reviling* is, in the Eye of God, a Sin of yet greater Consequence, and more offensive. Our Saviour gives us here one Instance to represent and include all others of the like Kind: *Whosoever shall say, Thou Fool.* Which taken in the ordinary Sense, may stand for any *bitter* and *reviling Term of Passion*; and as the Scripture Language does usually by *Fool* intend a wicked and abandoned Sinner, the Expression here seems especially to point out those rash, uncharitable, and furious *Censures*, which Men of angry Spirits and ill governed Zeal are apt to cast upon such as oppose them in Religion, or any thing else; or on those whom they have taken an hatred to, from some personal and private Pique. When Men are thoroughly heated against an Adversary, they are apt to fancy to themselves a License (which neither the Laws of God nor natural Right will authorise) of saying all the *bitter things they can*

can againſt him, without any Reſtraint from Charity or Good Manners, and often with as little regard to Truth. Every Failing of his ſhall ſerve to expoſe him as an Hypocrite; his Vertues ſhall be all miſconſtrued, and aſcribed to Oſtentation and Self-Intereſt; or his Vices ſhall be ſo improved, as if he were the vileſt Sinner upon Earth. Now 'tis all one whether a Man be thus ill treated *to his Face*, or *behind his Back*: The former indeed is more provoking, the latter more ungenerous; but both are included in this ſevere Denunciation of our Saviour againſt *whoſoever ſhall ſay to his Brother, Thou Fool.* 'Tis ſpoken of as a greater Crime than Mocking and Deriſion; becauſe it is much worſe to be wicked, than to be either deformed, poor, unfortunate, or of weak Underſtanding; and conſequently muſt ſtrike deeper into Mens Reputations to be ſo repreſented, than only to be rendered contemptible. *Reviling*, as it is the Effect of Rage and overheated Spirits, is alſo a very near Approach to *Murder*; the ſame Degree of Spleen and Paſſion that enflames Men to the one, having frequently ended in the other: And therefore our Saviour forming his Prohibitions here to guard the Sixth Commandment, had reaſon to lay the greateſt ſtreſs upon ſuch

Sins as would be likelieſt to endanger it. Beſide, that it is utterly inconſiſtent with the Meekneſs, Patience and Charity of the Chriſtian Religion, which ſtrictly forbids it, even under the higheſt Provocation. *Be pitiful, be courteous*, ſays St. *Peter, not rendring Evil for Evil, or Railing for Railing; but contrariwiſe, Bleſſing.* And thus the primitive Followers of our Lord behaved themſelves. *Being reviled*, ſays St. *Paul, we bleſs: being perſecuted, we ſuffer it: being defamed, we entreat.* And thus their holy Maſter had taught them by his Example: *Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he ſuffered, threatned not; but committed himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly.* Now if a Chriſtian ſuffering under ſuch ill Uſage is forbid (tho' natural Reſentment ſtrongly prompts him, and his Adverſary deſerves it juſtly) to *retaliate*, I need not prove he ſhould not give the *firſt Provocation*. Let me obſerve only, that this Practice of Reviling is ſo hateful to the God of Peace and Charity, ſo contrary to the Temper of Heaven, that *Michael the Archangel contending* even *with the Devil, durſt not bring againſt him a railing Accuſation; but ſaid, The Lord rebuke thee.* And as by the Divine Authority of our Religion, a Railer is infamous, and every

1 Pet. 3. 9.

1 Cor. 4. 12.

1 Pet. 2. 23.

Jude 9.

1 Cor. 5. 11.

Chri-

Christian is discharged from keeping Company with him upon Earth; so by a declarative Sentence passed already, he stands excluded by Name from the Society of the Blessed in Heaven. For what Happiness or Peace could we imagine there, and how should the Sufferings of good Men be at an end, and Charity be made perfect in that State, if such reviling Spirits were admitted, as must needs disturb them. 1 Cor. 6. 10.

Let us now consider in as few Words as may be,

III. The Third and last Improvement of the Sixth Commandment, the obliging us to *give due and speedy Satisfaction, as soon as is possible.* For tho' even the *injured* and *offended Person* is bound by the Precepts of Christianity to endeavour on his part also a *Reconciliation*, by accepting of reasonable Terms when they are offered him, and by a Readiness to forgive; yet I take the *Aggressor*, or him that *gives* the Offence, or *does* the Injury, to be the Person chiefly (if not only) concerned in this Paragraph, as in other Parts of the Sermon we shall find the Duty of the Sufferer more distinctly spoken of. So that supposing us here to be concerned only with the *Aggressor*; the

Method he must take to reconcile himself to the Party injured or offended, must be according to the Nature of the Wrong or Damage he has done him. Either,

(1.) By *Restitution*, when by Fraud or Violence he has injured him in his Estate, or wrong'd him in a way of Trade and Bargaining. This is a principal Part of Justice. Hence we find in the *Jewish* Law many Rules and Directions for the more exact and regular Performance of it. And tho' there are no precise Measures set down in the New Testament for the *Regulation* of this Duty; yet that it is still in general, a *Duty*, is evident from natural Light, the Gospel of Christ *presupposing* (and not always particularly repeating) such Obligations as common Honesty and Reason every day suggest to us. And thus when *Zacheus*, to whom our Saviour shew'd such Respect as to dine at his House, would recommend himself to him and others as a real Penitent, he immediately bethought himself of *Restitution*, and said, *Behold, Lord, the half of my Goods I give to the Poor; and if I have taken any thing from any Man by false Accusation, I restore him fourfold.* And this is the more necessary, because where such false Dealing or open Injustice has been done, Restitution is the *first Step* which must

Luke 19. 8.

must be made in order to Reconciliation: We can't expect an injured Man should be appeased without it; nor is it possible to make him due Satisfaction, so long as he continues under the real Effects of the Injury, and we detain that from him, which he only ought to enjoy or to dispose of. In other Cases (particularly the Offences of the Tongue, censorious Reviling or Detraction, and the like) we are to make him what amends we can.

(2.) By *Reparation to his Esteem and Credit in the World*; endeavouring to do him Justice in as public a manner as we have injured him, retracting our unworthy Censure and Suspicions of him, acknowledging the Fault of that reviling Language we have given him, and doing all that lies in our Power to reverse the *undeserved* Character we have exposed him in; or if deserved, to soften it according to the Rules of Charity; thus labouring as far as is possible (in effect at least) to unsay what we have said, and undo the Mischief we may have done him, that he may not suffer by our unchristian Passion and Indiscretion. 'Tis seldom we *can effectually* make him amends, and set him right this way; which therefore should make us keep the stricter Guard upon our Tongue, that we be not guilty of Offences and

and Mischiefs that are so hard to be rectified; because the Ill-nature of Mankind is apter to take in and nourish the ill Impressions of our Spleen, and the bad Character we give, than any after Vindications or Apologies we can make to soften or retract them: But it is however the only way that we can set our selves to Reparation in this matter; and therefore we are bound in Conscience to it, and let it avail as far as it can to that purpose. Again,

(3.) Where the Injury is of a lower Rate, or when an *Affront* is only in the case, Reconciliation may be effected by *Begging of Pardon.* This is the least we can offer to an offended Brother; and therefore we should never be backward in it, when it will be accepted. Perhaps we may think it a little disgraceful to us; but if it be a Disgrace, the *Sin* of an *ill Tongue* is but very gently punished by the *Shame of acknowledging it.* And as Pride was the main Principle of that Contempt, or other Rudenesses in our Language, from which the Offence arose; even natural Equity suggests, that no Satisfaction can be answerable, which does not apparently disclaim and mortify that Pride, the Insolence of which is to be made amends for by a contrary Act of Humi-

Humility and Submiſſion. But after all, I ſhall beg leave to think it *no Diſgrace*, but an Argument of an ingenuous Temper, to ask Pardon: and that whatever the vain Maxims of the World may teach, he is certainly the moſt a *Gentleman*, as well as moſt a Chriſtian, who reflects upon it as a greater Shame to have been guilty of ſuch Ill-manners, than to retract it; and therefore is always ready with a generous Submiſſion to revoke what he has ſaid or done unworthily.

Now which ſoever of theſe three ſorts of Satisfaction ſhall become reaſonable, according to the Nature of the Offence, and neceſſary towards a Reconciliation, our Saviour preſſes it here upon us, to loſe no Time, to make no Delays, but immediately to ſet about it; and that for two very good Reaſons: The firſt is, That our Devotions to God will be all unacceptable, and odious in his ſight, till this be done. This is ſufficiently hinted in thoſe Words: *If thou bring thy Gift to the Altar, and there remembreſt that thy Brother hath ought againſt thee: Leave there thy Gift before the Altar, and go thy way; firſt be reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy Gift.* It is in vain to hope that God will accept us, ſo long as, having given our Neighbour juſt Occaſion

of

of Resentment, our Minds continue the Abuse by an Averseness to give him due Satisfaction, or so long as we shall needlessly delay to offer it. And therefore upon the first remembrance of what we have said or done to grieve him, even tho' we should be then going to the private or public Services of Religion, we are oblig'd, if an Opportunity can be had at that time, to go to him and make up the Quarrel presently, by performing or promising such Satisfaction as the Laws of Christianity require; or if for want of Opportunity it be impracticable, then we must prepare our selves for it, by a Readiness and sincere Resolution at least to do it as soon as possibly we can: And the one or the other of these is so indispensable a Duty, that our Prayers will be but a mocking of God without it. The second Reason urged by our Saviour, is drawn from Prudence, as the first was from Religion. *Agree with thine Adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest at any time thy Adversary deliver thee to the Judge, and the Judge deliver thee to the Officer, and thou be cast into Prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost Farthing.* The Laws of every Nation protect the Persons, Goods, and Reputation

tion of every ſingle Subject that belongs to them, and will revenge the Injured. If therefore I have been ſo wicked as to have done a Wrong to my Neighbour, my wiſeſt Courſe is by a timely Submiſſion and Repentance to reſtore him to his Right, and prevent a Suit at Law, which will force me to it otherwiſe at a great Expence and Trouble. And thus the preſent Duty inculcated in this Paragraph of our Saviour's Sermon, is an Inſtance amongſt many others which might be produced, that true Religion and true Wiſdom are inſeparable; the Precepts of Chriſtianity being alſo Principles of Prudence, and providing as well for our Peace and Intereſt in this World, as for our eternal Happineſs in the next. But the Argument which ought to weigh moſt with us, in engaging our Practice of this or any other Chriſtian Duty, is the Authority of our Lawgiver *Chriſt Jeſus.*

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Of CHASTITY, *and of Needleſs* SEPARATION *after Marriage.*

MATT. V. 27,28,29,30,31,32.

Ye have heard that it hath been ſaid by them of old Time, Thou ſhalt not commit Adultery.

But I ſay unto you, that whoſoever looketh on a Woman to luſt after her, hath committed Adultery with her already in his Heart.

And if thy Right Eye offend thee, pluck it out, and caſt it from thee: for it is profitable for thee, that one of thy Members ſhould periſh, and not that thy whole Body ſhould be caſt into Hell.

And if thy Right Hand offend thee, cut it off, and caſt it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy Members ſhould periſh, and not that thy whole Body ſhould be caſt into Hell.

It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his Wife, let him give her a Writing of Divorcement.

But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his Wife, saving for the Cause of Fornication, causeth her to commit Adultery, and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth Adultery.

FROM improving of the Sixth, our Lord here goes on to the Seventh Commandment, which he fortifies by some new and necessary Outworks, not only denies us Entrance into this City of *Sodom*, but guards us off from any near Approach to it, extending Purity to a more excellent Latitude, reducing Marriage to the Strictness of its original Institution, and putting a Stop to the Beginnings of Adultery in this, as he had taken away the Occasions of Murder in the former; that a Christian may have all his Appetites in due Subjection, that he may be angry and sin not, that he may marry, and not offend. This we may suppose to be the true Meaning and Design of this Paragraph, as much as if our Saviour had express'd himself in the following manner.

"The

" The Law forbids Adultery, and ye " do not deny it does ſo; but beware leſt " ye deceive your ſelves with too ſhort " and narrow Definitions of the Crime, " vainly imagining, that where there is " not the outward Act of Lewdneſs, there " is no Adultery. For I muſt tell you, " that whoſoever allows his Eyes the Li- " berty of gazing upon a Woman, with " an Intention of kindling in himſelf or " her, laſcivious and unchaſt Deſires; and " whatſoever Woman adorns her ſelf out " of a Deſign of raiſing an unlawful Paſ- " ſion in the Breaſt of a Beholder; he or " ſhe, tho' they only indulge themſelves " in luſtful Wiſhes and Imaginations, " without proceeding to any unlawful " Act, are Adulterers in the Eſteem of " God, and will be puniſhed as ſuch. " And tho' perhaps, conſidering the Cor- " ruption of Human Nature, a Reſtraint " of this kind may ſeem as grievous as " the plucking out a Right Eye, or the " cutting off a Right Hand; yet it muſt " be done, if ye will avoid the Torments " of Hell-fire, which wait upon the " Breach of this Commandment. The " Want or Loſs of any Enjoyment here, " tho' never ſo delightful, or (as ye may " think it) hard to be parted with, is " ſurely rather to be choſen than eternal

" Ruin.

" Ruin. And as to the Matter of Di-
" vorce, which is another Liberty con-
" trary to the Tenour of the ſame Com-
" mandment, it was indeed for ſome pe-
" culiar Reaſons permitted to your Fa-
" thers to put away their Wives, when
" they had taken a Diſlike to them, pro-
" vided they did it with the Formalities
" of Law, a Bill of Divorcement put in-
" to their Hands. But this was not ſo
" from the Beginning, nor lawful in it
" ſelf; only a Licence granted to that
" ſtiff-necked Generation, for fear of a
" worſe Conſequence, and for preventing
" of a greater Evil. This Permiſſion I
" do now by Divine Authority revoke,
" and I will that ye my Diſciples keep
" ſtrictly up to the primitive Inſtitution
" of Matrimony, which was ſuch a Con-
" junction, as made Man and Wife one
" Fleſh, not again to be disjoined, but by
" Violence; and therefore whoſoever puts
" away his Wife, unleſs ſhe firſt of all
" break the Union by joining her ſelf
" with another, cauſeth both her and him
" that marries her to commit Adultery.

This Paragraph therefore ſupplies us with two Particulars worthy of our Enquiry.

I. The Extent of this Commandment, and the Height to which our Saviour carries the Notion of Chriſtian Chaſtity.

II. What he has directed with regard to Divorce.

I. *The Extent of this Commandment, and the Height to which our Saviour carries the Notion of Chriſtian Chaſtity.* When God, the ſole Author and Diſpoſer of all things, thinks fit to publiſh his Laws and Decrees to the World, it is not for the Devil to contend with the Almighty, and deny his Authority; no, that would be too much; all that this wily Enemy of Mankind has to do, is by falſe Gloſſes and Pretexts to beguile the frail Mind of Man, and endeavour to interpret away the Subſtance of the Command. This we ſee was the Caſe with the *Jews*; the Devil durſt not ſay that Adultery was lawful, when God had given this Commandment, *Thou ſhalt not commit Adultery*; but taking advantage of the Indulgence that was allowed that ſtubborn People, for the Hardneſs of their Hearts, to put away their Wives by a Bill of Divorcement for ſome great and notorious Crimes, he introduces it into Practice for every frivolous Pretence and idle

idle Dislike; and so far prevails over the Minds of that People, that we find their very Doctors and Interpreters of the Law gravely putting the Question to our Saviour, whether it was not lawful for a Man to put away his Wife upon *every* Occasion. Our Saviour confutes this Error, and at the same time explains the Prohibition in its utmost Latitude, extending it to all Uncleanness of the Mind as well as the Body; forbidding the *inward Lust* of *Fancy* and *Desire*: By which is not here meant all *natural Desire in general*; for God has implanted no Appetite in us that is originally sinful, or that becomes so any other way but by Corruption and Abuse. Nor is it the *first Kindling* of an impure Thought; for that an unavoidable Accident *may* do, and when it does, we ought to mourn for the Corruption of our Hearts, and labour presently to suppress it. But what our Saviour here speaks of, is a lustful Inclination blown up into a Flame by our *Encouragement* and *fond Indulgence*. It is the Act of the Will that makes this sinful; when a loose Heart sends out the Eye to pimp for its debauched Desires, and the roving lewd Imagination pleases and entertains it self with the Speculation of a Vice, which it wishes for an Opportuni-

ty of practiſing. And in this caſe Fornication or Adultery is really committed in the Heart; for ſo far as the Sinner dares to go, he goes: He has the Enjoyment in a corrupted Fancy, and the Defilement ſticks upon his Conſcience; his Spirit, the beſt Part of him, is debauched, and no thanks to any Vertue in him, that his Body is not ſo too. *Whoſoever looketh on a Woman to luſt after her, hath committed Adultery with her already in his Heart.* When we thus gaze and entertain a vicious Fancy, what do we do elſe but court Temptation? And where is it like to end, if Circumſtances happen to favour our Deſires, but in actual and compleat Impurity. St. *Peter*'s Expreſſion is remarkable to this purpoſe, where he deſcribes ſome who walked after the Fleſh in the Luſt of Uncleanneſs, *Having Eyes*
2 Pet. 2. 14. *full of Adultery, and that CANNOT CEASE FROM SIN.* Implying, that the Indulgence they gave to a luſtful Eye, not only argued, but encreaſed the Filthineſs of their Hearts, and chain'd them down to Habits of Lewdneſs by ſuch a powerful Faſcination, that they could not ceaſe from Sin. The ſad Example of *David* ought to be remember'd alſo, who from the Top of his Palace gazed himſelf into wicked Deſires of *Bathſheba*,

till

till he had made his Appetite too ſtrong both for his Reaſon and his Religion, and could not ſtop ſhort of finiſhing the Sin his Fancy had begun: nor could he ſtop even there; for Adultery with the Wife drew him on to a deliberate Murder of the Husband; and the Guilt of both theſe horrid Crimes ſo ſtupified his Conſcience, that 'tis thought to be near a Year before he was brought to Repentance for them by the Prophet *Nathan*. Whoſoever therefore would be chaſte, muſt keep a ſtrict Guard upon *his Eyes*, and as *Job* did, Job 31. 1. muſt make a Covenant with them. He muſt avoid with abhorrence all unclean Thoughts, and all laſcivious Books and Pictures. He muſt ſtop his Ears to all Smut, and indecent Jeſts, and lewd Converſation, and he muſt ſhun the Company of ſuch as are addicted to them. For as our Saviour's Deſign in this Paragraph is to fence in the Seventh Commandment, and in order to that directs us to guard the Purity of our Minds; and that this may be effectually done, he cautions us againſt ſuch Impreſſions from without as may defile them; this Inſtance of looking upon a Woman to luſt after her may very well include a Prohibition of whatever is like to contribute to the ſame Impurity. And now after the Divine Preacher had

thus reſtrained this Appetite, and directed us to ſuch an Exactneſs of Purity in our very Thoughts; one would not think, I ſay, that the Tempter could poſſibly ſuggeſt any thing againſt this Commandment, that could have any Influence upon us: Yet ſome Wretches there are ſo abandoned of God, and wholly given up to Sin and Folly, that after all that our Saviour has ſaid, ſhould he return to the World again, we ſhould hear them exceed their Maſters the Phariſees, and even dare to ask their Lord, whether *Fornication* be not lawful, pleading that, by their Interpretation of the Original, it does not appear that Fornication is any where forbid in the New Teſtament. They are willing to load Adultery as heavy as you pleaſe, and paint it in the blackeſt Colours, if you will but allow Fornication to be comparatively little or nothing: And indeed it muſt be confeſt, that Adultery is a Sin of a deep Dye, and has many and very heinous Aggravations; yet 'twere eaſy to ſhew that the New Teſtament every where abounds with Texts againſt Fornication as well as Adultery, and to ſhew that they both ſtand forbid by Name with equal Earneſtneſs. But I ſhall confine my ſelf to the Argument in this Paragraph of our Saviour's Sermon,

and

and deſire to know how Fornication is conſiſtent with the Chaſtity here preſcribed, and the ſevere Obligations to Purity, which thoſe are under who profeſs to ſerve a pure and holy God, and are baptized into a pure and holy Religion. *For this is the Will of God, even our Sanctification, that we ſhould abſtain from Fornication; that every one of us ſhould know how to poſſeſs his Veſſel in Sanctification and Honour, not in the Luſt of Concupiſcence, even as the Gentiles, who know not God.* 1 Theſſ. 4. 3, 4, 5. Muſt I refrain from every looſe and idle Thought, and may I commit actual Lewdneſs? Muſt I not look on a Woman to luſt after her, and may I fulfil the Luſts of the Fleſh with her? Muſt I cut off a Right Hand, or pluck out a Right Eye, rather than be enſnared by them, and may I become one Bone and one Fleſh with an Harlot? God forbid. If Nature is uneaſy under this Reſtraint, there is a Remedy provided; the Apoſtle tells us what it is, *To avoid Fornication let every Man have his own Wife, and every Woman her own Husband. If they cannot contain, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn. Marriage is honourable in all, and the Bed undefiled; but Whoremongers and Adulterers God will judge.* 1 Cor. 7. 2. Heb. 13. 4. Thus much for our

firſt Enquiry: Let us proceed to the Second.

II. *What our Saviour has directed with regard to Divorce.* Among the Political Laws which *Moſes* gave to the *Jews* for the Good-ordering of the Commonwealth, there was a *Permiſſion* for any Man upon diſlike of his Wife, to write her a Bill of Divorce, to put into her Hands, and ſend her out of his Houſe. But this was by no means given them, as a *Moral Precept:* It was only a *Toleration* of a Practice, which ſeems to have obtained amongſt them before; and becauſe of the *hardneſs of their Hearts*, it was not thought fit to abridge them of it under the Diſcipline of the *Moſaical* Law, leſt that ſtubborn, impatient and ill-natured People, if not allow'd to put away the Wives they hated, ſhould abuſe them, or ſhould return to Idolatry, where they ſaw Divorce univerſally practiſed. But they were only obliged by *Moſes*, to proceed in this Divorce with due Formalities of Law, which might prevent the Inconveniency of doing it raſhly, and in a Paſſion. Now this, which was a *bare Permiſſion* the *Jewiſh* School maintain'd, as a Practice *morally lawful*, and that it was no Sin in *foro Conſcientiæ* and *before God*,

God, as well as not againſt their Civil Conſtitution. But our Saviour, in order to the reſtoring of the Seventh Commandment to its due and moral Perfection, recals this Liberty here; and limits Divorce to the Caſe of Adultery. This is, in ſhort, what our Lord has done with regard to Divorce: And having put an End to the Evil by his recalling of the Permiſſion, there would be no need to enlarge farther upon this Paragraph, had not the Tempter here again interpoſed, and introduced an unjuſtifiable Practice, prevalent amongſt us at this Day, of Mens *forſaking* their Wives, and Women their Husbands, to live *ſeparately*, and this at the ſole Pleaſure of one of them, or by private Agreement of them both, without any *judicial Proceſs*, or ſo much as Complaint before an Eccleſiaſtical Judge, whoſe Sentence, even in the Caſe of Adultery, is required before a Separation. And what is this, but a direct putting away our Wives, without ſo much as giving them a Bill of Divorce, and ſo indulging our ſelves in a Licentiouſneſs, even unknown to the *Jews*. All the Difference that I ſee in it, is, that theſe disjoin'd Members have a Power of reuniting again, which the *Jews* had not; but if we conſider, what uſe is generally made

made of this, we ſhall find, that the froward Couple ſeldom meet again for the better, but for the worſe; as if it was on Purpoſe to repeat the ſame ſinful Act of *Separation*. It is no Excuſe, that they remain ſingle; I mean, that they do not offer to marry again ſo long as the forſaken Party lives; for ſuch a *needleſs* and *illegal Separation*, is certainly *of it ſelf* a very great Crime, tho' marrying again would make it greater, and tho' they have ſo much Religion, Honour, or regard to their Intereſt, as to abſtain from *Polygamy*, they very much expoſe themſelves to Temptations of Adultery; and indeed it is very hard for both Parties, who are known to live thus ſeparate, to keep their *Reputations* clear with the World, for People will be apt to cenſure them, deſervedly or not; becauſe Separation do's almoſt naturally produce Suſpicions of this Kind, and Experience has ſhewn many of them to be *too juſt*. Beſide, ſuppoſe a married Perſon, preſuming upon his or her own Strength, reſolves never ſo much before-hand, by a prudent and reſerv'd Behaviour, to avoid all Temptations, and to live a chaſt Life in a ſeparate State; yet conſidering the Weakneſs of Human Nature, and the many Temptations to which ſuch a Condition

dition of Life is obnoxious, this is an *unwarrantable Preſumption.* And moreover, ſuch a Perſon will be guilty of whatever Liberty the forſaken Party takes, who not being perhaps of the ſame Temper and Complexion, *cannot contain*, and yet is deprived of making uſe of the Remedy the Apoſtle preſcribes in this Caſe. But whatever weight theſe Arguments may have, there is another I am ſure that ought to be well conſidered, and that is the ſtrict Union of Affections, implied in the very *Nature* of Marriage, and promiſed under the ſolemn Obligation of an *Oath*, both by the one and the other, at their Entrance upon that State: As to that ſtrict Union of Affections, which I ſay is implied in the very Nature of Marriage, I know not how any Chriſtian can deſire it ſhould be better proved or illuſtrated, than by conſidering, that our bleſſed Lord has made it the Figure or Repreſentation of his Love to his Church; and unleſs we can ſuppoſe the Love of Chriſt to be a faint, an heartleſs, and inconſtant Love, it muſt be very abſurdly repreſented by any *ſlight* Affection. Marriage therefore, which is made an Emblem of this Love of Chriſt, could never give us any juſt and worthy Idea of it in its own

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Nature, if it did not imply ſuch an exceeding great Affection, ſo ſtrict, ſo indiſſolvable, as might render it in ſome meaſure fit for the Compariſon. One would think, this ſhould give Chriſtians a ſtronger and a truer Notion of the Endearments, which ought to unite a Married Couple, than generally we find they have. But if theſe Deductions from Religion ſeem too Speculative to a carnal Mind, and want the Influence upon Practice, which might be expected from them; ſure Principles of *Common Honeſty*, ſtrengthned with the *Obligation of an Oath*, may be ſuppoſed a proper Argument: I mean, that perpetual Union and Affection, which both Parties mutually engage themſelves to at the Solemnization of their Marriage. The Promiſe is made in Words, as expreſs as can be, to adhere to each other from that Day forward in all States and Conditions of Life, *for better for worſe, for richer for poorer, in ſickneſs and in health*, and under all theſe Suppoſitions, or whatever of this kind may happen, *ſtill to love and to cheriſh* ſo long as *'till Death* (which only ſhall diſſolve the Union) *part them*. This is ſurely a very *poſitive* and *ſolemn Promiſe*, and made more Solemn by their joining Hands upon it in the Preſence of the Church, or of

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Witneſſes that repreſent the Church; and heighten'd alſo into a *formal Oath*, by being promiſed in the more eſpecial Preſence of God; as appears by the Place, or at leaſt by the Religion of the whole Ceremony, and by the firſt Words that begin it, [*We are gathered together here in the ſight of God*] and by the ſolemn Proteſtation upon putting on the Ring [*In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt*, Amen] and by ſeveral other Paſſages throughout the whole Office, which muſt neceſſarily imply an Appeal to God upon the Truth and Sincerity of the Engagement; and this is the formal Nature of an *Oath*. Now upon this Conſideration is it not eaſy to ſee, that whatever Couple thus joined together, *according to God's Holy Ordinance*, ſhall wilfully part from each other, and live in a State of Separation, or which ſoever of the Parties ſhall thus ſeparate, tho' the other be unwilling, is guilty of a moſt notorious *Breach of Faith and Promiſe*, neither living together, nor loving as they engaged to do; and not only this, but of notorious *Perjury* alſo, in acting directly contrary to what they had promiſed *before God*, and with an awful Invocation of him. 'Tis to be fear'd, that many of thoſe who enter into

to ſuch an Engagement, are guilty of *extream Inadvertency*, and *want of Conſideration.* They don't attend to the Terms of the Contract, nor ever duly reflect upon the Extent of the Obligation; but look upon the whole Solemnity, as no more than a meer Formality, without which they cannot by Law attain the Ends they propoſe. Their End is Money-Advancement, or ſomething elſe far ſhort of what it ſhould be, and their Right to theſe in ſuch a Match, being confirmed to 'em by the Ceremony of joining Hands, *&c.* as the Law directs, 'tis all they think of, when they come to be ſo join'd. But this ſurely is a great and dangerous Prophanation of that Ordinance; and the Caſe is ſtill much worſe, if they really do conſider the ſtrictneſs of their Contract, and yet intend within themſelves never to be bound to perform it: For this is abſolute Treachery, a moſt ungenerous and villanous Falſhood, 'tis dealing as the Sons of *Jacob* did with the *Sichemites*, entring into a ſolemn Covenant, and under the ſhelter of Religion too to ſerve the Purpoſes only of an evil Mind. On the other Hand, I hope there are many, who enter into theſe Engagements with ſincere and hearty Reſolutions to act accordingly, tho' afterwards they make

make or find themſelves uneaſy under them, and have therefore a Mind to part. But true Affection is not variable by every little Accident, nor totally to be deſtroy'd by a great One. If it be pretended, that the *Humours* of the Huſband or Wife are intolerable, or the *Perſon diſagreeable*, theſe Points ſhould have been well conſidered *before* Marriage; for all after-Exceptions of this Kind, are guarded and proteſted againſt in thoſe Words of the Contract [*for better for worſe*] which ſignifie ſomething to be ſure, and what elſe can they ſignifie? The hazard of other Circumſtances being provided for in the Words next following [*for richer for poorer, in ſickneſs and in health*]. If *Danger of Life* be pleaded, or the *Sufferance of violent Injuries* and *Abuſes*, yet is there no ſuch Vertue as *Patience*, no ſuch Duty as *Submiſſion* to the Providence, and *Truſt* in the Protecton of God, required of us? And if they are, when muſt they be expected, when can they be exerciſed; but in a State of Suffering? But if a Remedy is to be ſought for, all that can regularly be done, is firſt to ſee what the good Offices of private Friends can do, and if they fail, then to apply to the proper Court, and ſubmit the Caſe to the Determination

tion of thoſe whom the Law has appointed Judges therein. And ſtill Separation, whether Legal or Illegal, is ſo bad a Remedy, that like deſperate Medicines, it ſhould not be ſo much as thought of, till all other Means have proved utterly incapable of Effect, and that they cannot poſſibly live any longer together: For to any good and diſcreet Perſon, ſuch Separation muſt be ſo comfortleſs a State, attended with ſuch danger of Ruin, both Temporal and Eternal, that all the Hardſhips which it is applied to cure, could ſcarcely make the Sufferer more uneaſy or unhappy. But the Unconcernedneſs of many looſe, unthinking People under it, as full of Mirth, and Air, and Jollity, as if no ſuch Misfortune had happen'd to them, makes it too evident, that it is ſometimes a State of *Choice*, more than of *Neceſſity*. And if this Practice goes on, perhaps in half an Age more, it will be thought needleſs ſo much as to pretend, or talk of ſuch a formal Thing as a Reaſon for Parting; and Marriage will become of Courſe, no more than a Temporary Concubinage, that may be broke off at Pleaſure with as much Freedom, as we change our Servants. The Laws indeed have hitherto ſecured the Continuance

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of the Marriage, by maintaining (in spight of any such Separation) the Validity of Jointures, Settlements, and other Civil Rights of it, but the Affection, Cohabitation, &c. which I beg leave to call the sacred Rights of Marriage (as being the Performance of what was solemnly vowed before God and the Congregation, when it was contracted) are even now by some People, broke through with as little Scruple, as if the Contract had been really made but for a Time. And tho' I will not charge our Laws with favouring this, any otherwise than by too general and dangerous a Connivance; yet I must say there is a Custom which directly encourages Separation, and therefore wants a full and positive Law to restrain it. I mean the scandalous Provision usually made before-hand, by Settlements or Marriage-Articles, for the Wife's separate Maintenance, in case her Husband and she should not think fit to live together. All such Provisions, call them by what Name you will, whether Pin-Money or any thing else, which serve, and are design'd to serve this Purpose, with whatever plausible Pretence they may be varnished over, I take to be of most pernicious Consequence, as providing for a Case, that ought not to be supposed amongst Christians, and putting

a Couple in mind of parting from each other, even then, when they are going ſolemnly to contract for a ſtrict Union, Affection, and Cohabitation during Life, and laying profeſſedly a Scheme for their doing that with Convenience, which ought not to be done at all, and which with almoſt the ſame Breath they vow before God and the Congregation, that they will never do. Now what is all this, but a monſtrous Abſurdity in the very Nature of the Thing, a moſt notorious ſhuffling in the Accounts of common Honeſty, and a moſt impudent Prevarication with God himſelf? What is it, but to empower and teach the Wife to diſregard her Husband, and to looſen that Dependance, which by the Divine Law ſhe ſhould always have upon him; for ſuch a Maintenance is ſecured to her, that ſhe may carry well or ill to him, without danger to her Intereſt, and leave him when ſhe pleaſes. And as to the real Influence of Miſchief ſuch Proviſions may have had, I am ſatisfied, that many Separations would never have been thought of, if this Security given beforehand, had not encouraged and prepared the Way for them. But perhaps Pin-money, and the like Proviſions before-hand for Diſſertion with Convenience, being not morally

1 Cor. 7. 3, 5.

morally evil, nor falling directly within the Letter of this Prohibition of Divorce, may be thought not to deſerve ſo much Notice, in a ſhort Summary of Chriſtian Practice, as I have taken of them; but becauſe our Saviour certainly deſigned here, to condemn every Thing that any ways promoted a Diſunion after Marriage: I ſhould not have been faithful to my Subject, if I had been leſs ſevere upon a Cuſtom, which ſo much encourages a Wife upon the leaſt diſlike to leave her Husband; and the rather, becauſe the Practice grows every Day more and more faſhionable.

CHAP. V.

Of taking God's Name in vain.

MATT. V. 33, 34, 35, 36, 37.

Again, ye have heard, That it hath been said by them of old Time, Thou shalt not forswear thy self, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine Oaths.

But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by Heaven, for it is God's Throne:

Nor by the Earth, for it is his Footstool: neither by Jerusalem, *for it is the City of the great King.*

Neither shalt thou swear by thy Head, because thou canst not make one Hair white or black.

But let your Communication be, yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of Evil.

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HE Third Commandment, *Thou ſhalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain*, was underſtood by the *Jewiſh* Doctors, as no more than a Prohibition of *Perjury:* And therefore as they taught, the People took it, and looked no farther for the Senſe of the Precept, than this ſhort Paraphraſe: *Thou ſhalt not forſwear thy ſelf, but ſhalt perform unto the Lord thine Oaths*; which probably was their allowed and common Gloſs, eſtabliſhed by Authority in their Schools, and cited as ſuch by our bleſſed Saviour, who ('tis obſervable) does not here repeat the very Words of the Commandment, as he had done thoſe of the Sixth and Seventh before, but their *Interpretation* only: Becauſe the Words of the Commandment, as God had delivered them, are ſo general, that *Perjury* is no more expreſſed in them than *prophane Swearing*; and as both are alike included and intended, the one is as eaſily reducible as the other, to the very Terms of the Law. But it was *their Gloſs*, that had injuriouſly reſtrain'd thoſe general Words, and therefore our Saviour cites *that*, in order to correct and ſupply the Defects of it.

Nor shall I need, in discoursing hereupon, to insist upon the Crime of *Swearing falsly*, which was then, and always has been (not only by the Force of this Divine Precept, but by the Light of Nature) acknowledged to be a grievous Sin; as *Murder* and *Adultery* also were, and for that Reason I forbore to enlarge upon *them* in the foregoing Paragraphs. For our Saviour left every Precept of the Decalogue, in the same full Force and Latitude, wherein it had ever been received or interpreted by the *Jews*: But where their Interpretation had too much narrowed a Command, and straitned the meaning of it, he enlarged it to its due Perfection and Extent. His new Explications therefore and Improvements, are what I am properly to consider: And what those are with regard to this Third Commandment, will be the clearer, if we suppose him only thus to have expressed himself.

" Ye all acknowledge your selves ob-
" liged in Conscience, by Authority of
" the Third Commandment, to *swear*
" *nothing falsly*, but to be *very sure of the*
" *Truth*, and very *punctual in the Per-*
" *formance* of whatever ye have sworn.
" If due Care be taken of this, ye con-
" clude the Law is strictly enough ob-
" served,

" ſerved, and fully ſatisfied. But, I " who come to declare to you the Di- " vine Will and Law more perfectly " than ye have yet been able to diſcern, " or willing to apprehend it, require of " you much more than this; that ye not " only *ſwear not falſly*, but *not at all*; " that in your *common Converſation*, ye, " upon no Account, and in no manner " or form of Speech, invoke the Sacred " Name of God, tho' the Matter con- " cerning which ye have occaſion to " ſpeak be never ſo true. Nor yet think, " that the Sin of Swearing may be eva- " ded by *indirect* Oaths: For Swearing " by God's Creatures, is in effect Swear- " ing by him who created them, and " *for whoſe Glory they are, and were crea-* " *ted.* For Inſtance, Swearing by *Hea-* " *ven*, is ſwearing by him whoſe Throne " and Palace it is; and as the Splendor " of his *Majeſty* ſhines chiefly there, ſo " do's the Glory of his *Providence* in " this lower World; the *whole Earth* is " but one mighty Kingdom, under the " Inſpection and Government of God, " and therefore he that ſwears *by the* " *Earth*, ſwears by that ſovereign Pow- " er that form'd, ſupports, and governs " it. What has *Jeruſalem* in it that is " venerable, but the Ark and Temple,

" the Signals of God's ſpecial Preſence? " 'Tis this peculiar Relation to God, as " the Capital City of his Reſidence in " the Church, that ſtamps a ſacred Cha- " racter upon it; and therefore whoſo- " ever ſwears *by Jeruſalem*, ſwears by " that great God, who has choſen to " place his Name and Worſhip there. " And the Caſe is ſtill the ſame, when " ye ſwear by Creatures, which have " not that peculiar Sanctity and Relati- " on to God; as when ye ſwear *by your* " *own Heads:* For the Object of an Oath " muſt be ſome powerful Being; now " ye your ſelves cannot change the co- " lour of one Hair upon your Heads, and " therefore the Oath muſt be underſtood " to be by him that can, and that is no " other than God. If then ye have oc- " caſion in your familiar Converſe to af- " firm, or promiſe, or deny any Thing, " let a ſimple Affirmation, Aſſurance, " or Negation, ſuffice; 'tis enough to ſay " it is, or is not; ſhall be, or ſhall not be " ſo; for whatſoever is more than theſe, " is ſinful.

The general Terms in which our Saviour has couched this Prohibition, *Swear not at all*, &c. have occaſioned ſome to imagine, that he prohibits, and condemns therein, as unlawful, all manner

ner of Oaths, without Distinction; not only such as are rash, needless and prophane, but such also as are administred for the Peace and Good of Human Societies, the Security of Governments, and the judicial Discovery of Truth. But that this is an inconsiderate and erronious extending of the Precept beyond the real Design, is evident, because an Oath religiously, and solemnly taken *in Truth, in Judgment, and in Righteousness*, as the Prophet expresses it upon weighty Occasions, or for the Public Good, is an *Act of Divine Worship*, and the Name of God is *reverenced*, not prophaned thereby. The Author to the *Hebrews* also acknowledges, that *an Oath for Confirmation is an end of all Strife*; and therefore surely Controversies may be determined by it, and cannot be determined any other Way more properly, or more effectually. The Apostles and Primitive Christians, never scrupled to take an Oath on such occasions as deserved it. Nay, our Saviour himself, who to be sure would not do any Thing unlawful, answered upon Oath, when it was required of him in the High-Priests Court of Judicature. All which being considered, I shall need to enlarge no farther against the Opinion of such Interpreters;

Jer. 4. 2. Deut. 6. 13. Deut. 10. 20. Heb. 6. 16. Matt. 26. 63, 64.

preters; but proceed to shew, what Use of God's Name, or what sort of Swearing it is which is indeed forbidden (over and above the Case of Perjury) in this Third Commandment. And here is forbidden,

I. *All Swearing in common Conversation*; whether directly, by God, or by his Creatures; or indirectly, in any Terms whatsoever, which *imply* an Oath, and were only introduced to qualify the Harshness of it. That the Prohibition here is intended as a Restraint upon our ordinary Conversation, appears from these Words, *Let your COMMUNICATION be yea, yea; and nay, nay:* And that this Restraint is not laid without good Reason, will be plain, if we consider the *Nature of an Oath*, which is an Appeal for our Sincerity and Truth to some superior Being, that thoroughly knows our Consciences, and will certainly punish Falshood. Now this superior Being, however the Expression may disguise it, can be no other than God: And tho' such Oaths may be taken, when required by Authority, and then the Importance of the Affair makes them Acts of Justice and Duty, as in Form and Substance they are Acts of Religion; yet surely they are too solemn

ſolemn things to be proſtituted to every trifling and ſlight Occaſion, and much more to a prophane and deteſtable Cuſtom of filling up a Diſcourſe with them upon no Occaſion at all. Let the Matter we ſpeak of be never ſo true, let our Intention in promiſing be never ſo honeſt and ingenuous, it is not fit that with ſuch an inſolent and ſawcy Freedom, we ſhould ſummon the Great God, whenever we pleaſe, to be a Witneſs of it. For as no private Man can of his own Authority ſlay a Malefactor, without ſinning againſt the *Sixth* Commandment, and being guilty of Murder; ſo neither can he, but by the Command or Direction of the Magiſtrate, appeal to God as Witneſs of his Truth, without offending againſt this *Third* Commandment, and taking the Name of God in vain. Our Saviour therefore charges us to content our ſelves with barely *affirming* or *denying* in our Converſation, or however with *repeating* ſuch Affirmation or Denial, by way of Aſſurance, that we really ſpeak as we mean. *For whatſoever is more than this*, ſaith he, *cometh of Evil*; that is, (1.) From the *Evil one*, the Devil, that great Promoter of Wickedneſs; the Tongue that is exerciſed in Oaths and Curſes, being ſet on Fire of Hell; and cuſtomary Swearing being

being so void of Temptation either from *Pleasure* or from *Profit* (and I may add from *Honour* too; for no Man generally meets with less Respect, or is hearken'd to with less Regard than a common Swearer) that it would be difficult to account for the Practice of so fruitless a Vice, if it did not proceed from the Instigation of a malicious Spirit, who tempts Men chiefly to those Sins that are most affronting to God. Or, (2.) This Expression [*cometh of Evil*] may signify that the very Use of an Oath, and all Occasions for it, proceeds from the *evil Practices* of *Falshood* and *Treachery*, so very common amongst Men: Or rather, (3.) That common Swearing proceeds from something *evil* and *sinful within our selves*, an evil Want of Reverence to God, and of a due Sense of Religion, or Consideration of what we say; an evil Affectation of conforming to the wicked Customs of our Company; or from a secret Distrust of our own Credit, as when Men are conscious they have ly'd themselves out of any reasonable Expectation to be believed, without giving the strongest Security for their Truth by swearing to it: For certainly continual Appeals of this kind must look as if the Swearer knew his Character and Veracity to be

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ſuſpicious. But in which way ſoever of all theſe, the Words be taken, it is apparently true, that Swearing in ordinary Converſation *cometh of evil*; and that methinks ſhould be Reaſon enough againſt it. Let us only now take a ſhort View of the ſeveral Kinds of Swearing here prohibited. As,

1. *Swearing directly by God, by Chriſt, or by the Holy Ghoſt*, under any of their Names or Titles, as, *Jehovah*, *the Lord*, *the Almighty*, *our Maker*, *Saviour*, and the like. For the Ground of the Commandment being the Reverence that is due to the Name of God, every Perſon in the Sacred Trinity is equally intituled to that Reverence, as God; and every Way of expreſſing or deſcribing him is the Name of God, whereby we make him known, and therefore is to be reverenced. To this Head may be reduced the ſwearing by any thing which immediately relates to the great Work of our Redemption, as by the *Life*, *Death*, *Blood*, or *Wounds* of *Chriſt*, or by the *Sacrament*, wherein theſe awful Myſteries are ſolemnly repreſented, and Chriſt himſelf is ſpiritually preſent.

2. *Swearing by any Creature.* Now to ſwear by a Creature, is to ſwear by any *Angel*, by any *Saint*, by *Heaven*, by *Earth*,

Earth, or the like: And this, by our Saviour's expreſs Doctrine, is ſwearing by God himſelf, in effect; for all theſe were created by him, depend entirely upon him, and are nothing at all without him. They have no Power of their own to do Juſtice upon ſuch as ſwear falſly by them; whatever any of them can do is but as Inſtruments in the Hands of God, and therefore God muſt be ſuppoſed to be meant, when they are ſworn by: or elſe in ſwearing by them, we ſet up *them* for Gods, by attributing a Divine Power to them, which is rank Idolatry. And ſo it is when Men ſwear by any of thoſe Names the Heathens gave to what they worſhipped. For, as I ſaid before, the very Nature of an Oath implies, that ſuch an Appeal is made to ſome ſuperior and Almighty Being, which thoroughly knows our Conſciences, and can and will reward our Falſhood. But,

3. All ſuch Expreſſions alſo are forbid, as do *covertly*, and with ſome *Diſguiſe, Abbreviation*, or the like, *imply an Oath*, however qualified and ſoften'd, as, *God knows*, *Faith*, *egad*, and others, which the Wit, ſhall I ſay, or the Folly of Mankind, has contrived to evade a ſcandalous and barefaced Prophaneneſs. All theſe, and every Uſage of this Kind, are but as ſo

many

many trifling Methods to deceive our ſelves. Oaths they ſtill are, and will without doubt be charged upon us accordingly at the Day of Judgment, being forbid, not only in this Paragraph of our Saviour's Sermon, but in other Places of the holy Scripture, as in that of St. *James*'s Epiſtle, *Above all things, my Brethren, ſwear not, neither by Heaven, neither by the Earth, neither by ANY OTHER OATH: but let your yea, be yea; and your nay, nay; leſt ye fall into Condemnation.* And thus much for the Sin of Swearing. Beſide which we are forbid, Jam. 5. 12.

II. All uſing of the Name of *God*, or *Chriſt*, or *Jeſus*, *Lord* or *Saviour*, in our ordinary Diſcourſe, without a due and ſuitable Reverence, and a juſt Occaſion. For as ſuch a Reverence to the Name of God is the very Reaſon and Foundation of our Saviour's Precept againſt *Swearing* here, the ſame Reaſon equally affecting ſuch a *looſe* and *careleſs Mention of it*, as I am now deſcribing, this alſo muſt be ſuppoſed to be equally forbidden thereby. 'Tis undoubtedly *taking* the Name of God *in vain*, and therefore falls within the very Letter of the Prohibition in the Third Commandment. If it be uſed in *Curſing*, there is not only *Prophaneneſs*, but

but a *desperate Malice* too, to encrease the Guilt; and it is justly accounted horrible to all religious Minds. But suppose it be not uttered in a Curse, the Prophaneness still is visible, whether it be by way of Exclamation, Admiration, or Expletive; as, *Good God! O my God! O Jesu! O Lord!* and many the like Expressions too frequently used; as if those venerable Names were fit only to fill up a Period, and to give an Air of Boldness and Impudence to our Conversation. Nor is the Case at all mended, when those Names are used in a way of rash and unconsidered Prayer; as, *God bless us, God be merciful, God save you, Lord have Mercy upon us*, &c. which very often occur in some Mens common Discourse, when there is no due Seriousness attends it, and probably no Thought at all of what is then desired by such a Prayer. And sometimes it comes in so *unseasonably* and *improperly*, having no Coherence at all with the rest of the Discourse, that it is downright *Nonsense*, as well as Impiety. Let those (if there be any such) that use this, and yet have that Regard to Religion which they pretend, consider, that their being *good Words* and *good Wishes* depends more upon their Sincerity and Devotion in uttering them, than

than upon the Mechaniſm of Syllables and a Sentence; and that all the Goodneſs that can be in the Expreſſion it ſelf, will never atone for the trifling Manner of uſing it: but it will ſtill be *taking of God's Name in vain*, while we treat it with ſo little Solemnity, and throw up our Addreſſes to him at ſuch an impertinent and thoughtleſs Rate. I will but juſt name a third thing naturally included in the Prohibition, *viz.*

III. All *heedleſs, unattentive, and irreverent* taking even of *lawful Oaths* impoſed by Authority. Theſe Oaths, and of theſe eſpecially ſuch as are by way of *Qualification for an Office*, or *Obligation to diſcharge it well*, are for the moſt part look'd upon as meer Formalities in Law, and ſo the Religion of them is loſt; and thoſe that take them are gazing about the while, or thinking of other Matters, with no more Devotion and Concern than if they were hearing ſome idle Story, or repeating an ordinary Diſcourſe. And the Caſe is not much better, in this regard, with Oaths of *Evidence*; thoſe that take them are apt to conſider them no farther than as ſolemn Promiſes to ſpeak the Truth, not doing it with that awful Solemnity that becomes an *Appeal to the*

Great God, in what they say. But such a Behaviour is plainly *taking the Name of God in vain*, because they mention him and appeal to him, without any Consideration to whom they are speaking, and perform what is in the very nature of it a solemn Act of Worship and Religion, without that serious Sense of God, that ought to fill their Minds, and without that Reverence to his Name, which is the Foundation of the Third Commandment.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Of FORGIVING *of* INJURIES.

MATT. V. 38, 39, 40, 41, 42.

Ye have heard that it hath been ſaid, An Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth.

But I ſay unto you, that ye reſiſt not Evil: but whoſoever ſhall ſmite thee on thy Right Cheek, turn to him the other alſo.

And if any Man will ſue thee at the Law, and take away thy Coat, let him have thy Cloke alſo.

And whoſoever ſhall compel thee to go a Mile, go with him twain.

Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away.

RETALIATION of Evil being one of the Permiſſions indulged the *Jews* in their Politic Laws, becauſe of the Hardneſs of their Hearts, leſt if they were not allowed this Liberty, under ſtated Rules, and by the Sentence of the Magiſtrate, they ſhould in revenging themſelves exceed all Bounds and Meaſures; our Saviour takes occaſion from hence to lay down in this Paragraph the Duty of the *injured Party* or *Sufferer* (as he had before under Conſideration of the Sixth Commandment that of the Aggreſſor) forbidding here all manner of private Revenge, or returning Evil for Evil; as tho' he had ſaid,

" The Judicial Law, it's true, allows " of a Requital of Like for Like, that " he who deprives his Brother of a Mem- " ber, forfeit one of his own; as an Eye " for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth. " But I charge you all, whoever will be " my Diſciples, that ye preſume not to " give your ſelves the ill-natured Satiſ- " faction of rendering Evil for Evil, ei- " ther in a public or a private way: but " that rather than revenge *one* Injury ye " ſuffer *two*. If any Man ſtrike you,

" ſtrike

" ſtrike him not again by way of Reſent-
" ment or Retaliation. And rather than
" take the Advantage, which even *the*
" *Laws* do give you for proſecuting upon
" Wrongs of ſmall Concern, or Impo-
" ſitions of no great conſequence, ſhew
" your Adverſary how little his Malice
" or his Violence moves you, by being
" forwarder to bear, than he is to inflict,
" and ready to do more to gratify him
" than he requires. If by contentious
" Suits he extort from you what is really
" your own, and what ye can really bear
" the Loſs of; let him take that, or more,
" rather than conteſt it farther with him:
" And if he will force you againſt your
" own Convenience to go with him *one*
" *Mile*, go with him *another*, rather
" than paſſionately diſpute your Liberty
" in ſo ſmall a matter. Say not this
" Tameneſs is like to encourage him to
" farther and greater Injuries; that is
" more than ye are ſure of: Meekneſs
" and Complacency are the beſt Means
" to ſoften an Enemy; but tho' he *ſhould*
" be ſo diſingenuous, that ye have Rea-
" ſon to fear the contrary, truſt that to
" the Providence of God, who is able to
" preſerve you, and will (without any
" Interpoſition of yours) ſufficiently a-
" venge you. Nay, let the Injury be

" what it will, be it ever ſo great and " unſupportable, never apply your ſelves " to Magiſtrates and Laws to *gratify a* " *revengeful Humour*; never proſecute " *meerly for the ſake of puniſhing*; but " either for the public Good (ſeparate " from all Ends of private Paſſion) or to " obtain a *neceſſary Reparation* for the " *Damages* ye have *really received*. Nor " is this all, that ye abſtain from return- " ing Evil for Evil; ye muſt even *relieve* " *the Neceſſities* of ſuch an injurious Per- " ſon. If by his Circumſtances he be " brought to beg of you, give him free- " ly and cheerfully; if he deſire to bor- " row, refuſe not to lend him; laying " aſide all Grudges at the Evil he has " done you: for my Religion obliges " you to be charitable both to Friends " and Enemies.

I ſuppoſe in explaining of this Paragraph further there will be no need to prove here the *Lawfulneſs of Wars*, wherein the public Honour and Intereſt is concerned: Nor that the Prohibition does not extend to *Magiſtrates* puniſhing ill Men according to the Laws of their Country: for they are deputed by the Authority of God, to whom Vengeance belongs, *to execute Wrath upon him that does evil*, and they are *not to bear the*

Rom. 13. 4.

Sword

Sword in vain. But that which seems in general to be the View of this whole Paragraph, is to restrain all personal Resentments and Revenges, and to inculcate, that we should not do an hard, a mischievous, or a vexatious thing to any one, because he hath done the like to us, where many times our own Good is not so much considered as the others Hurt; for the Word ἀντιστῆναι signifies rather to oppose Evil to Evil, than to ward off an Injury. But there being four distinct Precepts or Directions included here, we will consider them severally.

I. The first is, what a Christian must do who is injured *in his Person*, by *Blows*, or *Words of Contempt*; expressed by *striking on the one Cheek*. Now the Laws of every Country taking cognizance of all Injuries betwixt Man and Man, that carry a real Damage along with them, and having provided such a Satisfaction proportionable, as shall restrain the Offender's Insolence, vindicate the Person wrong'd, and make up the Damage he has suffered; we are first to consider whether the Grievance we have to complain of, be such as the cool and unprejudiced Justice of those Laws have thought great enough to deserve a legal Remedy.

If it be such, our Saviour does not here forbid us to apply to the Magistrate in Defence and Maintenance of our Right; for he himself, when he was injuriously
John 18. 22, 23. stricken by the High Priest's Servant, protested in open Court against such Usage. But if it be so small an Injury, that the Laws have taken no notice of it, our Holy Master requires that we should rather *put it up*, than offer to revenge it. And tho' the Words are not to be taken in so strict and literal a Sense, as if we were bound industriously to give an insolent Offender Opportunities for a second Injury, and to solicit new Abuses from him; yet thus far we must extend the Precept, that no real or pretended *Fear* or *Probability* of his taking advantage, from our Patience under *one* Abuse to add *another*, should in any wise prompt us to Revenge and Retaliation. We must refer our selves to God, and bear with every thing that happens, rather than break through so plain, direct, and positive a Command as we have here, not to *return Evil for Evil*. This will doubtless be thought an *hard Saying*, by those who through a long indulged and humoured Tenderness for themselves, have wrought the Constitution of their Minds to such a Temper, they can bear nothing. But

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who can help it? Religion, as it proceeds from God, must be an *authoritative Rule*: our Passions therefore are entirely to be govern'd by it, and not that Rule bent to a Compliance with our Passions. 'Tis impossible to avoid reflecting here upon that most unchristian, barbarous, and senseless Practice of *Duelling*, whereby two Lives, or more, are staked by way of Satisfaction for Affronts, which not only a Disciple of Christ is bound to forgive; but even a prudent Heathen would think it below him to regard. The great Pretence is *Honour*, but the Notion of Honour wretchedly mistaken and abused. True Honour has by all wise Men been thought to consist in such a *Greatness of Mind*, as carries a Man above the Resentment of Contempts and Injuries. And certainly it requires a greater Share of Courage to *pass by* an Affront, than to *revenge* it, because the Difficulty is greater. Now the proper Object of Courage is Difficulty, as the proper Spring and Principle it issues from is Honour: and therefore the Conquest of a Man's Passions being harder, beyond Comparison, than the Indulgence of them, Courage is most shewn in such a Conquest, and that must be the truest Honour, that inspires with such a Courage; nor

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can any thing be more oppoſite to both, than is that peeviſh Weakneſs, that is ruffled and diſcompoſed at every Affront, and enſlaves Men continually to their own Pride and other Mens Ill-nature. But beſide this grand Miſtake of the Duelliſt in his Notion of Honour and Courage, the Practice of ſuch Men is as defective in *common Juſtice* and *Equity*: for what Proportion is there betwixt the trifling Injury that provokes them (too inſignificant it ſeems for human Laws to take the Cognizance of) and the *Life of a Man*, in the Deſtruction, or at leaſt in the Hazard of which they place their Satisfaction. Laſtly, they conſider not to *how little purpoſe* this wild Scheme of Satisfaction really ſerves. Their End muſt be either *Revenge*, *Reparation of the Damage received*, or *Defence of their Reputation*. If the *firſt*, 'tis the Revenge of a Mad-man, that will fire his Enemy's Houſe the very next to him, which in all Probability will communicate the Flames to his own, and burn that too, or at leaſt apparently endanger it. If *Reparation of the Damage* be aim'd at, or *Defence of Reputation*; ſuppoſe he kill his Enemy, what does he get by it? or how does that retrieve his Credit? Will that waſh off the Aſperſion, take off the Blow, or

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prove the Lie to have been falsely given? Not at all. His suffering by the Affront or Injury, is still just as great, as the Offender's Insolence left it. What I have hitherto said, are Arguments from *Reason* only, against such a Practice: And I might add, it were enough to restrain a good and wise Man from it, that thereby he acts contrary to the *Laws of the Land*, in defiance of the Government under which he lives, and is protected from whatever can reasonably be look'd upon as an Injury that deserves to have any Notice taken of it. But were this not so, and that no Arguments could be drawn from Reason or Human Laws against Duelling; if it was really dishonourable not to fight; if declining it would, as is sometimes objected, expose a Man to farther Abuses; if Duels were not fought upon the account of such trifling Injuries, as generally they are; if engaging in them would repair a Loss, or wipe off a Disgrace, or be indeed a suitable Revenge to a revengeful Temper; yet surely there is something that with a Christian should outballance all, that Duelling is directly contrary to his Holy Profession, which requires Patience under Disgrace and Reproaches. And no Person deserves the Character of a Disciple

ciple of the ſuffering and forgiving *Jeſus*, who acts ſo contrary to the whole Tenor of his Religion, and ſacrilegiouſly uſurps the Right of God, who has reſerved the Power of Vengeance to himſelf, having ſaid, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay.*

II. The ſecond Precept, or Direction, concerning our Behaviour under Wrongs, is when we are injured in *our Properties*, when our Goods or Eſtates are taken from us either privately, or under colour of Law, expreſſed here by the *taking away of the Coat.* In this Caſe there is a greater Liberty of inſiſting upon Redreſs and Reparation, than in the former: the Courts of Juſtice are open, and the Authority of the Laws may be appeal'd to, and the Injurious be forc'd to Reſtitution. The Precept here is not againſt all going to Law: for Courts to determine Right of Property and Poſſeſſion, as they are neceſſary, conſidering the Violence and rapacious Temper of ſome Men, and contribute very much to the good Order of the World, are doubtleſs agreeable in the Nature, Deſign, and Uſe of them, to the God of Order and Juſtice. And being ſo, perhaps it may be thought there is no great Danger in exceeding in the Uſe we make of them; for ſince we owe a Juſtice

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to our ſelves and our Families, as well as to others; and ſince going to Law is a lawful Method of doing our ſelves Right; How (may ſome ſay) can any Man be to blame in taking all Advantages the Law will give him? But permit me the Liberty of anſwering in the Words of an Apoſtle, equally true of this as of what himſelf applies it to, *The Law is good, if a Man uſe it lawfully.* Chriſtianity has directed certain Bounds and Rules of Moderation, which ought to be carefully obſerved in this Matter, or elſe our going to Law may be as great a Sin, as that Man's Injuſtice that gives occaſion for it. 1 Tim. 1. 8.

(1.) Firſt then; let the Injury we have ſuffered, or the Right we ſue for, be ſuch as *is really of great moment to us*, and that not in our own Judgment only (for Pride or Covetouſneſs may impoſe upon us when we make the Eſtimate our ſelves) but in the Judgment of ſome wiſe, good, and peaceable Neighbour, to whom we ſhould diſcover freely our Deſign of going to Law, before we take one actual Step in it, together with the Reaſons which we think make it neceſſary and fit for us ſo to do; and be ruled by his Opinion, whether it may be worth our while to proceed or not. For 'tis a Shame to Chriſtianity, and even to the common Bonds

Bonds of Good Nature and Good Neighbourhood, that every *trifling Damage*, every *pitiful Treſpaſs*, or every *inconſiderable Demand*, ſhould preſently create a Suit at Law. Let us remember that a Chriſtian is obliged to be of a merciful and forgiving Temper, to ſtudy his own Peace, and the Peace of thoſe about him, which he can never be ſaid to do, while he is acted by ſuch a litigious Spirit. I ſuppoſe the Precept of our Saviour here to be levelled eſpecially at this very thing, *the going to Law upon trifling Occaſions*, where the Injury or Loſs is ſuch as we can well bear, and is of little Conſequence to our Fortunes or our Families. However this certainly is the leaſt that can be meant by it; and therefore if his Authority have not Influence to over-rule us in ſo ſmall a Matter, 'tis in vain to pretend to call our ſelves the Diſciples of Chriſt.

(2.) When we go to Law, even upon the moſt allowable Occaſions, it muſt be *without any Malice or Deſire of Revenge in the Heart*. How grievous ſoever the Wrong that has been done us is, whatever we have ſuffer'd or are like to ſuffer by it, be the Juſtice of our Demands and the Injuſtice of our Adverſary's Refuſal ever ſo great and apparent, let none of theſe things enflame us to a Thirſt of

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returning Evil for Evil, so as to make that in any measure the Principle we go upon in the Suit; remembring, that a Christian is not to use the Law purely to punish or to hurt his Adversary, but to do himself and his Family Justice.

(3.) We must take care during the whole Time the Contest is depending, and as well before it is commenced as after it is determined, that *our Behaviour towards him be with great Meekness and Civility*, by no means giving our selves a Loose of railing at him and speaking ill of him, affronting or insulting him the while, as many do, who weakly imagine that a Law-suit is Justification enough for all the ugly things they can say of an Adversary, or the Rudenesses they can shew to him. Nor is this all; we must be ready to believe the best of him, and willing, whenever he can be brought to it, to make up the Difference by the Arbitration of Friends, or any other easy Way, that may prevent the many Temptations to Evil, and the Inconveniencies on both Sides, which may be expected in continuing the Suit; choosing rather by such an Arbitration to recede a little from our Right, than obstinately to dispute it Inch by Inch with him, to the disturbance of Peace and Charity. But if such

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an Agreement be rejected on *his* Side, and the Law takes its courſe, then,

(4.) When the Matter is brought to an Iſſue, and the Trial is over, we muſt be able to *ſit down cool and contented, whatever the Determination be.* Submitting to the Loſs of our Cauſe, if it be given againſt us, without vexatiouſly carrying the Suit from Court to Court, in hopes at length to ruin an Adverſary with the Expence, or weary him out with the trouble of Attendance. I do not ſay, that where there is evident Injuſtice done, Corruption of Witneſſes, or bribing of Juries (not ſuſpected only, but capable of ſufficient Proof) and this ſuch as unqueſtionably turn'd the Verdict *againſt*, which otherwiſe would have been *for us*. I do not ſay in theſe Caſes we are always bound to acquieſce (tho' if our Loſs or Damage be tolerable, it may be our wiſeſt Way) but that we may lawfully try our Right a ſecond time, or (if it be of very great moment to us, and we have ſtrong Preſumption of Juſtice on our ſide) a third time, *&c.* But we muſt not do any thing like this for Contention-ſake, and to be troubleſome, from a proud Reſentment of being caſt, an obſtinate Humour of Revenge, or a greedy Appetite of what we ſue for.

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These Rules are all necessary to be observed by every Christian who endeavours to right himself by Law, and perhaps the acquiring such a Temper as is requisite, may be a more difficult Task, and give a Man more Uneasiness than the Injury, and he might with less Trouble and less Danger sit down with the first Loss. These Considerations, if duly weighed, would, it is to be hop'd, cure many Christians of that Litigiousness, to which they are too much addicted, and which is certainly a very great Crime in them. Christians cannot well err on the other hand, in suffering themselves to be ill treated; but they may be too severe in their Exactions of Justice, in always insisting on the Letter of the Law.

III. The Third Precept or Direction concerning our Behaviour under Wrongs, is with respect to the Injuries received from *Superiors*, when a Man *abuses the Advantage he has over us by Strength or Power*, to force us to do what he has *no Right* to require of us; expressed here by *compelling us to go with him a Mile.* In this case our Saviour commands us not to be surly and inflexible, tenacious of every little Privilege or Exemption, which the Laws have given us from such De-

mands; but (if there be no moral Evil in the thing) to do what is required, or twice as much, for the sake of Peace, rather than tumultuously and clamorously to contest it. If to this it be objected, what then do the Protection of Laws, the Notion of Liberty, or the Favour of special Privileges, signify, if we must give them up to the Oppression of every insolent Invader? I answer, In this, as under the former Head of going to Law, we are not forbid to maintain our selves in such legal Advantages, as by the Judgment of wise and good Men, are of great Consequence either to our selves or to the Public. Our Saviour never intended hereby to set aside the Force of Laws; but what I presume he would have us to do by this Precept, is, that to Impositions of little moment, which are personal only, affecting our own private Liberty, and even these such tolerable Injuries, that they are rather a meer Breach of Privilege than any real or considerable Damage to us, we should patiently and calmly submit; the Breach of Charity and Peace being like to end in much worse Consequences than the Breach of such a Privilege.

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IV. The fourth Precept obliges us not only to that paſſive Diſpoſition which has been deſcribed, excluding Reſentment and Revenge, or requiring Patience and Submiſſion under the Injuſtice of an Enemy, but that we ſhould ſo perfectly ſet aſide the Conſideration of the Injuries he has done us, as to ſhew the ſame active Generoſity *in doing good to him*, as to thoſe who never gave us Provocation. We muſt do good to *all Men*, whether Friends or Enemies, or indifferent Perſons; and this is here expreſſed by the two Inſtances of Giving and Lending. If he that has injured us fall into Poverty, and either need the Relief of Alms, or upon occaſion, when it may be ſerviceable to him, be ſo far humbled, as to deſire to borrow Money of us; we muſt give as freely to him what we can afford to give, and lend as freely to him what he would borrow, if we can ſpare it, as we would to any other indifferent Perſon; not daring to refuſe, upon any Pique or Reſentment againſt him for what has formerly paſs'd between us. That this is the true Meaning of the Precept, as it ſtands in this Part of our Saviour's Sermon, I have no manner of doubt, nor can I better illuſtrate it than by theſe Verſes from the

Epistle to the *Romans*, which inculcate the very same thing. *Dearly Beloved, avenge not your selves, but rather give place unto Wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine Enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him Drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap Coals of Fire on his Head. Be not overcome of Evil, but overcome Evil with Good.* As for the Objection from the Nature of *Friendship*, and what Distinction the Gospel allows us to make in favour of that, it will fall in to be considered in the next Paragraph; as what concerns in general the Duty of *Almsgiving* will in that which follows it.

Rom. 12. 19,20,21.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Of the Loving of Enemies.

MATT. V. 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48.

Ye have heard, that it hath been ſaid, Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour, and hate thine Enemy.

But I ſay unto you, Love your Enemies, bleſs them that curſe you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which deſpitefully uſe you, and perſecute you.

That ye may be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven, for he maketh his Sun to riſe on the evil and on the good, and ſendeth Rain on the juſt, and on the unjuſt.

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the Publicans the ſame.

And if ye ſalute your Brethren only, what do you more than others? Do not even the Publicans ſo?

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.

THE foregoing Paragraph, it may be thought, has drawn out the Duty of *forgiving of Injuries* to a mighty Length: It obliges us to abstain from all Retaliations of Evil in private; it forbids all violent and angry Prosecutions in Courts of Law, and Justice; it charges us to run the hazard of Suffering many Injuries one after another, rather than fence our selves against them, by a Spirit of Revenge; nay, it enjoins us so far to forget the Evil that has been done us, as to relieve the injurious Person, if he should afterwards fall into Distress. One would be apt to think, that whosoever can do all this, acquits himself sufficiently as a generous Christian: And yet there is something more and higher expected from us, which the present Paragraph requires. 'Tis not enough, it seems, that we *forget what is past*, and be ready to do good to an Adversary *hereafter*, as it may lie in our Way: But even now, while the Injury is a doing, while his Malice has us actually in chase, while our good Name lies bleeding fresh by his vile

vile and venomous Reflections, and we are ſuffering every Day by all the Miſchiefs he can do to our other Intereſts; nay, and if his Power and Cruelty extend ſo far, even while our Bodies are tormented, or our Lives expiring by them; we muſt *love* and *bleſs* him, *pray for* him, and *do him Good*; and this is the true Standard of a Chriſtians Perfection in Charity. Our Saviour takes occaſion the rather to urge this, becauſe of a popular and prevailing Error amongſt the *Jews*, who having read that their Anceſtors were commiſſioned by God, as Miniſters of his Juſtice, utterly to deſtroy the ſeven Nations, that poſſeſſed the Land of *Canaan* before them; to blot out the Remembrance of *Amalek* under Heaven, and were diſcharged from ſeeking the Peace and Proſperity of the *Ammonites*, and the *Moabites* conſidered not that theſe were ſpecial Caſes, fixed by the Divine Command, and grounded upon Reaſons both of State and Religion; but drew an Inference very falſly from them to their own private and perſonal Quarrels, and advanced it into a Maxim, that tho' in general, they were to *love their Neighbours*, yet they not only *might*, but *ought to hate their Enemies*, eſpecially ſuch as were Enemies to their Law

Deut. 7. 12, &c. Deut. 25. 19. Deut. 23. 3, 4.

and Worſhip. This their Doctors taught with much Aſſurance, and the People received it with a malicious Readineſs, as being naturally violent and revengeful. But our Saviour here corrects their Miſtake; and requires his Followers, on the contrary, to behave themſelves with the greateſt Meekneſs and Beneficence to all that injure them, to pray for their Enemies Converſion, and to do them Good, even tho' they are deſpitefully abuſed, and perſecuted by them at that Inſtant, whether for Religion, or for any private or perſonal Cauſe.

"Ye know (ſays he) that by the "Law, ye are commanded to love your "*Neighbours*, a Word, which in its due "Extent and Latitude compriſes *all Mankind*, and all Mankind in general is "really intended in it. But your Doctors have diſtinguiſhed away the Force "of the Precept, and narrowed the Signification of the Word, to a Fellowſhip in the ſame Religion, Civil Polity, or private Friendſhips, and in *this* "Senſe teaching you to *love your Neighbours*, have falſly form'd an Antitheſis, that you may *hate your Enemy*. "On the contrary, I tell you, that even "the worſt Enemy ye have is your Neighbour, and whatever his Religion, his

"Coun-

" Country, or his Uſage of you be, ye
" are bound to love him, even at the
" Time that he is moſt injurious and
" abuſive. Does he curſe, or rail at
" you, and ſpeak Evil of you? Do ye
" in return wiſh well to him, and ſay
" all that ye can juſtly ſay in Commen-
" dation of him. Does he purſue you
" with implacable Hatred, is he daily
" doing you all the Miſchief in his Pow-
" er, or does he perſecute you for the
" Teſtimony of a good Conſcience, with
" all the Fury and Cruelty that Hell
" can inſpire? Do all the perſonal good
" Offices ye can to him upon all Occa-
" ſions; contrive to benefit him, as he
" does to injure you; pray earneſtly and
" every Day to God for his good Eſtate in
" this World, and ſuch a thorough Con-
" verſion as may bring him happily to
" the next. By this ye will manifeſt
" your ſelves to be the Sons of God,
" whoſe Providence is equally exerci-
" ſed over all his Creatures, not diffe-
" rencing in this preſent State of Things,
" the Righteous from the Wicked, but
" making his Sun to ſhine on the Evil and
" on the Good, and ſending Rain on the
" Juſt and on the Unjuſt. For if your
" Love reaches only to your Friends, to
" thoſe who are, or may be beneficial

" to

" to you, what Reward can ye expect " for this? Nature and Self-Intereſt " prompt you to it, and even the *Publicans* ye ſo much deſpiſe, can practiſe " it. And if ye be only reſpectful to " thoſe of your own Family or Neigh- " bourhood, common Civility and good " Manners oblige to this, and it is no " more than the worſt of Men attain. " But I would have you Chriſtians, who " are the Sons of God by Adoption, to " imitate your Heavenly Father in a " more extended Charity and univerſal " Benevolence.

Our bleſſed Saviour here not only gives his Diſciples the true Meaning of that Precept, *Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thy ſelf*, extending Neighbourhood to all the World, and Love to the moſt exalted Degrees of Kindneſs; but what we may obſerve to be uſual with him, when the Duty goes much againſt the grain of human Nature, and the common Practice of Mankind (as in this of loving our Enemies, and in that of not laying up Treaſures upon Earth) he condeſcends to give Reaſons for our Obedience, from the Uſefulneſs and Excellence of what is commanded. Let us therefore conſider,

I. The

I. The Duty it ſelf of Loving our Enemies.

II. The Motives and Arguments by which our Lord has condeſcended, to urge and encourage us thereto.

I. The Duty it ſelf of Loving our Enemies. The meaning of the Word *Love*, in this Place, is beſt explain'd by our Saviour himſelf, in thoſe Three Inſtances of Friendſhip and Affection, *Bleſſing*, *doing good*, and *praying for* them, as the contrary Inſtances of *curſing*, *hating*, and *deſpitefully uſing and perſecuting*, explain what is here to be underſtood by an Enemy.

(1.) *Firſt* then, We are obliged to bleſs them, the Word uſed here is εὐλογεῖτε, which implies both the *ſpeaking them civilly to their Faces, and ſpeaking well of them behind their Backs.* Tho' they reproach, revile and ſlander us, treat us when preſent with the moſt contemptuous and inſulting, the moſt ſcurrilous and bitter Language; and when we are abſent, make it their Buſineſs daily to leſſen and defame us, and to ſay all the ill Things of us, they can either hear, imagine, or invent: Our Conduct is to be directly

directly the Reverse of this; we must answer them in the most civil and courteous, the most obliging and good natured Terms; and when-ever we have occasion to speak of them in Company, we must labour to conceal their Faults, where Charity and Justice do not require us to discover them, we must put the best Construction upon their Actions, and the fairest Gloss upon their Characters that they will reasonably bear; and we must on all Occasions be ready to publish whatever in them is vertuous and commendable.

(2.) The Second Instance, *Doing good*, is of a mighty Latitude. It extends as far, and shows it self in as many Forms, as the Necessities of our indigent Life, and the Troubles of our uncertain State, as far as all that our Enemies can possibly suffer, all that they can stand in need of, all that we can do to help and to relieve them, and all the Benefits they are capable of receiving, either with regard to Soul, Body, or Estate. Tho' they are daily contriving new Injuries, or repeating old Ones, and doing us all the Mischief in their Power; yet we must act a contrary, and a better Part towards *them*, by all such Acts of Charity, as suit best with their present Circumstances and

Con-

Condition, relieving them in Want, comforting them in Affliction, aſſiſting them in their Difficulties; and if they will admit of it, adviſing them in their Affairs, reproving them for their Sins, admoniſhing them of their Duty, in ſuch a way as may be likelieſt to have a good Effect upon them. And in ſhort, we muſt be ready always to do for them, whatever may be really of Advantage, to the forwarding of their temporal or eternal Happineſs.

(3.) By the Third Inſtance, we are taught to *pray for them* alſo, even for thoſe that bitterly malign and perſecute us. What Help we cannot give them our ſelves, we muſt ſincerely and fervently pray God to give them, recommending them to his infinite Power, and infinite Compaſſion to reſtore their Health, relieve their Wants, and bleſs them with all needful Bleſſings: As *David* did for his Enemies, who when they were ſick, *cloathed himſelf with Sack-cloath, and humbled his Soul with Faſting, and prayed for them*, tho' *his Prayer returned into his own Boſom.* But eſpecially recommending them to the *Grace* and *Mercy* of God, that he would never revenge upon them the Injuries they have done us. *Father, forgive them, for they know* Pſalm 35. 13.

not

not what they do; as the greateſt of Sufferers prayed for thoſe who were then abuſing and murdering him with the greateſt Inſolence and Cruelty; ſetting us hereby an illuſtrious Example of that perfect Charity he requires. We ſhould beſeech God, by the Power of his Holy Spirit, ſo to awaken their Conſciences, and ſo to improve their Convictions, that they may be brought to a true and effectual Repentance for all their Sins, that a thorough Converſion to God and Goodneſs may be wrought in them, and their Souls may be ſaved in the Day of the Lord Jeſus. All this is imply'd in the Word *Love*, and is a Chriſtian Duty from which no one, who pretends to be a Diſciple of our charitable Lord and Maſter, can hope to be excuſed. For no leſs than this brotherly Affection for all Mankind, be they never ſo injurious, will be accepted by him. But perhaps it may be objected, that if this extenſive Affection be due to my *Enemies*, there will be no room for any Diſtinction in favour of my *Friends*. If I am bound to do all the good Offices I can for *them*, what is there I can do more for *theſe*? I anſwer, that tho' by Chriſtian Principles, *Friendſhip*, as a Duty, is extended to all Mankind, even to thoſe that hate and injure us,

us, as well as to those that do us Good, and our Religion (now) calls it Charity; yet *particular* and *special* Friendship, the Loving of one Person more than another, which induces a *voluntary additional* Obligation, and is one of the greatest Comforts of Society, is doubtless still as lawful, and as commendable as ever. I need go no farther for an Instance, that will throughly justifie this, than our Lord himself; who tho' he was continually instructing, warning, admonishing, healing, and doing Good to an ungrateful and malicious People, and tho' he purposely came into the World to *die for* his Enemies, which is the strongest Effort of Love that can be made even to our dearest Friends, had nevertheless his twelve Select Disciples with whom he conversed more intimately, and taught with greater Diligence and Freedom, and prayed for in a particular Manner, with more than ordinary Tenderness and Concern. And even in *that* Number, Three of them were singled out for special Confidences and Favours. And even of these Three, St. *John* is eminently distinguished, as the Disciple whom he loved, his Bosom Friend; no doubt therefore, our Religion, notwithstanding the extensive Charity

Rom. 5. 10. John 15. 13. Mark 4. 33, 34. John 17. Mat. 17. 1, 2. Mark 5. 37. Mark 14. 33. John 13. 23. John 21. 20.

rity it requires, has left us room enough for particular Friendſhips. And if it be ſtill ask'd, what theſe particular Friendſhips can imply, and ſuppoſe, beyond what is included in that Charity? I anſwer, that ſuch a Friendſhip conſiſts in three Things: The doing of *real Benefits and good Offices*, the Diſtinctions of *ſpecial Honour and Eſteem*, and the particular *Freedom and Intimacy of Converſation*. Now real Benefits are either ſuch as are *neceſſary*, as relieving the wants of People, aſſiſting them in Diſtreſs, praying heartily for them, admoniſhing for the good of their Souls, doing Juſtice to what is commendable in them, and ſhewing a Tenderneſs to the reſt of their Character; thoſe I confeſs are Benefits promiſcuouſly due to all Mankind, whether Friends, Enemies, or indifferent Perſons, according to the Knowledge we have of their Neceſſities, and to our own Ability of ſerving them: Yet even here, in *ſome of theſe*, where it may ſo happen, that a *particular Friend* may need and require our help at the ſame time, an indifferent Perſon or an Enemy do's, and *we cannot relieve*, or *do ſervice to them all*. I queſtion not but we may *prefer* the Service of *our Friend*; and that, becauſe there is another Moral Duty, called *Gratitude*, which in his Caſe throws

throws an additional Weight into the Scale. Or farther, Benefits may be such as are not strictly necessary, but *voluntary*; and, if I may call them so, redundant: Now these I may reserve *for my Friend*. For tho' I am bound to relieve an Enemy, if I can, when he is in want, *&c.* I am not bound to make him extraordinary Presents, to solicite extraordinary Advantages and Preferments for him, to leave him Legacies, or make him my Heir, and the like. Again, the *two last* constituent Parts of Friendship, which I mentioned, are peculiar to *it*; an Enemy cannot claim them. As Friendship ought to be founded on Vertue, built up by good Offices, and strengthned by a grateful Sense of them, the *Distinctions of special Honour and Esteem* are due to it, not meerly, because *we love*, but because the Vertue and Merit of our Friend *deserve to be distinguished*, and his particular Regard to us ought in Justice to be returned. And lastly, the *Freedom and Intimacy of Conversation*, is what the Scripture no where requires us to use, with either a known or a suspected Enemy. This is entirely sacred to Friendship: So says our Saviour to his Apostles, *I have called you Friends; for all Things which I have heard of my Father, I have made* John 15. 15.

known unto you. And indeed, to diſcloſe to an Enemy our inmoſt Thoughts and Purpoſes, and the Secrets of our Affairs, would only enable him to do us the more effectual Miſchiefs; whereas Religion was never deſign'd to overthrow common Prudence. I hope the Objection is by this Time ſufficiently anſwered, and Charity to our Enemies ſhewn to be conſiſtent enough, with a particular and diſtinguiſhing Favour to our Friends. And now, ſince the Practice of ſuch a Love to thoſe that hate and injure us, as is here required, may ſeem very difficult to Human Nature; Let us ſee,

II. The Motives and Arguments by which our Lord has condeſcended to urge and encourage us thereto.

(1.) The firſt is, that hereby we *prove our ſelves to be the Children of God*, who diſpenſes the *neceſſary* Benefits of Life with a promiſcuous Bounty, gives out the Light and Warmth of the Sun to cheriſh the Perſons, and direct the Affairs, not only of thoſe that love and ſerve him, but of the unthankful and rebellious alſo, and ſends his Showers to enrich and bleſs the Lands not only of the Good, who employ the Fruits of them to his Glory, and the Relief of others; but of the worſt of Men,

Men, who turn his Grace into Lasciviousness, pervert his Benefits to Luxury, and the Riches he bestows upon them to Oppression and Injustice. Now, if our heavenly Father is thus daily kind to those that are daily provoking, and perhaps blaspheming him, no Argument can be stronger than this, to all who have a right Notion, what an Honour it is to be esteem'd the Children of God, and who consider that Imitation is the most natural Evidence, that they stand so related to him. For Children are apt to imitate their Parents, in whatever they observe in them, especially, what is most remarkable and conspicuous; and shall not *we* then endeavour to resemble our Heavenly Father in one of his chiefest Properties, that of doing Good to the greatest Offenders. By such a Love to our Enemies, as his Example has traced out to us, we should be best able to satisfie our selves, and to convince the World, that we are the Children of him, whose infinite Goodness we endeavour to express in our Behaviour, tho' in Degrees far short of it, and with much of childish Imperfection: And as this Attribute is, that which of all others renders the Divine Being it self most ami-

able: A Reſemblance of it in us would be moſt to our Praiſe and Honour.

(2.) A Second Argument is from the *Reward which Chriſtians expect.* It is but reaſonable, that ſince Chriſt aſſures us of Eternal Happineſs upon our Obedience, that we ſhould be willing to obey his Commands, how diſagreeable ſoever they may be to our corrupt Natures: For ſurely we who live under more glorious Promiſes and Hopes, ſhould be ready to do more than thoſe, who have no ſuch Expectation. If our Love to thoſe about us be only a return for Favours received, or to oblige them to farther Kindneſſes, 'tis mean and mercenary, we have had our Reward here, and what can we expect hereafter? In Truth, a due Obſervance of the other Laws of Chriſtianity, ſuch as Humility, and a low eſteem of the Treaſures of this World, would make the Love of our Enemies, which ſeems ſo difficult a Duty, more eaſy: For Pride and Covetouſneſs are the great Obſtructions to the Practice of this Love, by raiſing in us falſe Notions of Honour and Self-Intereſt, and ſo making us to look upon the Duty as too ſevere, when all the Difficulty proceeds from thoſe Paſſions, which ought to be ſubdued and kept under.

(3.) Ano-

(3.) Another Argument is from the *Practice of the Publicans*, who in the Eſteem of the *Jews*, were the worſt of Men, yet even theſe knew how to be kind and courteous to their Friends, their Neighbours, or their Kindred; and if our Love extends no farther, it is a Sign, that it proceeds not from a *Principle of Religion*, but from the meer Force of *natural Civility*, or from the *Mechaniſm of Education*. For certainly, Nature, good Breeding or Intereſt, may have Power enough over thoſe, who make no Pretenſions to Religion, to oblige them to return a Courteſy or a Complement, whoever it is that gives it, whether a Friend or an Enemy; to ſalute thoſe that ſalute them, nay, and often (as Occaſion makes it neceſſary) to treat with abundance of good Words and outward Candour, thoſe whom they really hate, and who they know hate *them*. But nothing leſs than a Senſe of Duty and Obligations from *Religion*, can ever carry a Man ſo far as to *love an Enemy* in good earneſt, and not only to ſpeak him fair, but to demonſtrate his Sincerity, by a conſtant Readineſs to do him Service, an uniform Generoſity of Carriage and Behaviour towards him. By this therefore we muſt diſtinguiſh

our ſelves as *Chriſtians*, under the Power of ſpiritual Principles and heavenly Grace; which will enable to perform what Nature, Worldly Policy, or Cuſtom can never reach to.

Our Saviour concludes all with this Exhortation; *Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect:* And a very proper Concluſion it is, both with Reſpect to this particular ſublime Duty, of Loving our Enemies, and to the reſt of the Improvements of the Decalogue, which went before. It's true, no Man *can be perfect, as God is perfect.* I mean as to the *Degree*, becauſe God is infinitely ſo, and therefore it may look as if Chriſt commanded an impoſſible Thing, but that Perfection which the Goſpel requires is a *moſt earneſt and diligent Endeavour after Goodneſs, eſpecially Charity:* And this is certainly, in our Power. We muſt ſtrive to reſemble the infinite Goodneſs, *as far as we are able*, and that becauſe of the Relation Chriſtians bear to their Heavenly Father, by Regeneration and Adoption; *They are the Children of God by Faith in Chriſt Jeſus*; and therefore muſt put on his Nature by a Transformation of their own,

Gal. 3. 26.

own, into as near a Similitude to his in every Perfection as is poſſible, eſpecially in that of Love: For ſo ſays St. *John*, *Let us love one another: For Love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God.* 1 John 4. 7.

CHAP. VIII.

Of Almſgiving.

MATT. VI. 1, 2, 3, 4.

Take heed that ye do not your Alms before Men, to be ſeen of them: Otherwiſe ye have no Reward of your Father which is in Heaven.

Therefore, when thou doſt thine Alms, do not ſound a Trumpet before thee, as the Hypocrites do, in the Synagogues, and in the Streets, that they may have Glory of Men. Verily I ſay unto you, they have their Reward.

But when thou doſt Alms, let not thy left Hand know what thy right Hand doth:

That thine Alms may be in ſecret: And thy Father which ſeeth in ſecret, himſelf ſhall reward thee openly.

OUR

UR Lord having in the foregoing Paragraphs corrected certain Errors in the *Jewish* Explications of the Decalogue, and some other popular Mistakes among them, the clearing of which was requisite to the instructing his Disciples rightly in his own Religion, he proceeds now to give some Cautions for the better Performance of the three great Duties, as they are esteem'd in most Religions (and particularly were so in that of the *Jews*) *Almsgiving*, *Prayer*, and *Fasting*. This Paragraph is about Almsgiving; and the Caution is, that we should not do it out of Ostentation, which in other Words, would be to this Effect.

" Whatever others do, I would have " *you*, my Disciples, when ye bestow a " Gift on any poor Man, to be very " careful, that ye do it not out of a vain " Desire of being applauded for your " Charity: For if this be your Design, " ye have received your Reward alrea- " dy in that Applause, and must expect " none hereafter in the Kingdom of " Heaven: Therefore chuse not public " Places, as the Hypocrites do, for Di- " stributions of your Charity, as if ye

" were

" were rather marketting for Fame and " Reputation, than discharging a good " Conscience towards God, and Kind- " ness to the Poor; or as if your Vertue " would be wholly lost, if the Parade " and Pomp of it, did not draw an ad- " miring Croud about you. On the " contrary, be ye so afraid of deceiving " your selves by a Vanity of this Na- " ture, as to chuse the *most retired Pla-* " *ces,* where ye may bestow your Alms " with the greatest Secrecy, except, " when ye may reasonably hope to do " Good by your Example, and *that* be " the true Reason of your appearing. " And God, who knows the secret " Thoughts of your Hearts, and the Prin- " ciple and Design of your Actions, will " certainly at the great Day of Account, " reward you openly before Angels and " Men, so that ye shall by no Means " lose the Credit of your good Works, " by denying your selves the seeking of " that Praise from Men, but shall re- " ceive the Honour of it, with more la- " sting and substantial Glory, from the " unerring Mouth of God.

Now Almsgiving, tho' not expresly commanded in this Paragraph, is yet by our Saviour's Caution for the right Performance of it, supposed to be a Christian

stian Duty. My Business therefore must be to explain,

I. What it is that Christians are obliged to do in general, with regard to Almsgiving.

II. The true Meaning of this particular Caution, of not doing it before Men, to be seen of them.

I. *What it is that Christians are obliged to do, with regard to Almsgiving.* And this will best be done, by considering, (1.) To what Persons we are to give. (2.) What, or how much. (3.) When, or at what Time.

(1.) I begin with the first, where I am to shew, to *what Persons* we ought to give. And these no doubt are properly those who are *in want*, and are *not able to help themselves*. If they can do this, tho' they be in want, 'twere better even for themselves, as well as for the public Good, that they are left to their own Industry, than suffered to prey upon the Fruits of other Mens Labours, while they indulge themselves in Sloth and Idleness: For Idleness is the greatest Corrupter both of Body and Mind, an Enemy to the Health, a certain Fixer of Poverty, when Men are once fall'n into it,

it, as well as the usual Cause and Occasion of falling into Poverty; the Seed-plot of many Misfortunes, the Parent of many Vices, and the Spring of several public and mischievous Crimes, the Pest of a Common-wealth, and what apparently tends to its Decay and Ruin. In Consideration of which Evils, the A-

2 Thes. 3. 10. postle St. *Paul* wrote thus to the *Thessalonians*, *For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any Man would not work, neither should he eat.* And afterwards speaking to such as these,

Ver. 12. he says, *Now them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own Bread.* The proper Objects of Charity, therefore are poor, helpless Orphans and Widows, such sick, and aged, and decayed Persons, as are not able to help themselves; to assist these is a singular Piece of Charity, and this Charity an eminent Part of Christianity, a pure and undefiled Religion. For so St.

James 1. 27. *James* hath told us, *Pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the Fatherless, and Widows in their Affliction*, viz. to comfort, support and relieve them in the Affliction they labour under. But as those who are unable to help themselves are the

proper

proper Objects of Compassion, and to be relieved on that Account; so are there certain other Circumstances to be considered in this Case, as requiring a more especial Charity.

As first of all, if the Person fell into Want and Poverty, not by his own Neglect or Vices, not by Idleness or Debauchery, but by Calamities either in his Body or Estate, which it was not in his Power to prevent: This Case requires an especial Favour. Here God in the way of his Providence prepares an Object for our Charity, and therefore no doubt requires a freer Exercise of it, than where a Man makes himself so by that which God forbids, by Idleness, Luxury, and Excess.

And then again another Circumstance, which commands a more especial Charity, is, where the Person is a Christian, and that not only in Profession, but in Practice too. And this is that which St. *Paul* considered, *As we have there-fore Opportunity, let us do good unto all Men, especially unto them who are of the Houshold of Faith.* There is a Charity due to all who stand in need of our Assistance, but more especially due to them who make Profession of Christianity, as being Fellow-members with us, of the Gal. 6. 10.

Body

Body of Christ, and Heirs of the same Glory that we our selves expect from him, and therefore spiritually related to us, and more particularly dear to Christ himself, and therefore worthy of more Regard, where other Circumstances are alike, than those that have not so much of the Divine Image upon them, and of his Grace in them.

Add hereunto a Third Circumstance, that ought to recommend a poor Person to our especial Consideration; namely, natural Kindred and Relation to us. For as the proper Rule of Charity, first requires a Provision for a Man's own Family; in so much, that *He is worse than an Infidel, who provides not for them of his own House*; So the next Care it requires, is of the *Branches* of the same House. But here observe, that I speak of the Matter of Charity only; for as to public Places and Offices in Church or State, no doubt, but a fit and able Person is to be preferr'd before a Relative; because public Offices are designed for public Advantage, and therefore the best qualified are to be chosen without Regard to Blood and Affinity, unless a near Relation be equally fit, or at least sufficiently and duly qualified; and this may suffice to shew the propereſt Objects

1 Tim. 5. 8.

of

of our Charity. Proceed we now to the

(2.) Second Point, which is, *how much* we ought to give: And here the general Rule is, that we give according to the wants of others, considered together with our own Ability. Where I shall lay down these two Rules, *First*, That we are not so to give, as to exhaust the very Fountain. But yet, *Secondly*, That we are obliged to give liberally, with regard to our Estates and Power.

First, We are not so to give, as to exhaust the very Fountain, to disable our selves from being in a Capacity of giving more. For if to give, be to do a good Action highly acceptable to God, and agreeable to our own Minds; is it not absurd and childish, by an over forward Zeal, to run our selves out of Breath for it; and out of mere eagerness of the Duty, to destroy our own Capacity of performing it? Besides, were there any Obligation upon us from God to break our Estates into pieces, and to distribute them to the Poor, how would it consist with the other Obligations, which he has certainly laid us under, of providing for our Families, according to the Degree we are placed in? Or suppose, there were no Families to be taken care of, what would

would be the Issue of such an extravagant Bounty, but a vain and useless Reciprocation? For when I had by this means made my self Poor, another must put himself into the like Circumstances to enrich me, and so on in an endless Circle of Change and Confusion, to no manner of Purpose. For tho' our Lord required a certain young Man to sell all he had, and to give to the Poor, and to follow him (who no doubt would have provided for him, had he complied with that Command) the Precept there was only a Trial, whether his forward Client could find in his Heart, or not, to quit all his worldly Possessions for the sake of Religion, if Times should come that might make it necessary, as afterwards the Times of Persecution did. So that it implies no more to us in general, than that whosoever will be a Christian in earnest, must sit so loose to all the Enjoyments in this World, as to be sincerely ready and willing to part with them, how great, how dear soever, when they cannot be kept without quitting his Religion and a good Conscience. But no part of the Scripture, that I know of, obliges us by any standing Law to part with all we have in Charity to others, and thereby reduce our selves to want.

Yet

Yet, *Secondly*, There is no doubt, but that every Man ought to give *Liberally*, with reſpect to what Eſtate he hath. This is ſuggeſted in the Words, *Give Alms of ſuch Things as ye have.* Tho' ye have neither Silver nor Gold to give, yet give of ſuch Things as ye have. From whence it appears, that there is a Bounty demanded even from meaner Perſons, a Liberality required in them; and much more from thoſe of Fortunes or Eſtates. But that which does moſt effectually ſhew, that God requires us to give liberally, is, that the Reward of Charity ſhall riſe in Proportion to the Generoſity and Greatneſs of it. So St. *Paul* tells us, *He which ſoweth ſparingly, ſhall reap ſparingly; and he which ſoweth bountifully, ſhall reap bountifully.* To the ſame Purpoſe is the Exhortation that follows, *Every Man according as he purpoſeth in his Heart, ſo let him give; not grudgingly, or of Neceſſity: For God loveth a chearful Giver.* God requires that we give with free and cheerful Minds, and therefore hath not punctually determined the very Sums, or the ſtrict Proportion to be given, but left that looſe and unſettled; that there may be room to ſhew our Liberality. But I have ſaid enough of this Head, to make way for the

Luke 10. 41.

2 Cor. 9. 6.

(3.) Last Point, *When* we ought to give. The Resolution is, that we are obliged then to give, when Christian Prudence shall determine, that it is most seasonable so to do. And tho' I will not say, that it is always, in all Cases, in all Circumstances to be our Rule, to give *speedily*, and *without delay*; yet it is generally so, and that for Two very good Reasons.

First, Because it is best to give, while we have Opportunity and Ability so to do, both which may fail us afterwards, although we have them at present. We may be surprised by sudden Death, and so deprived of the Opportunity of doing the Good we had designed; and likewise of the Reward thereof, if our Delay in so doing, proceed from any unwillingness to the Duty, as probably enough it did. And then again, we know not how our Estates may vary, what Changes may possibly come upon us, and therefore 'tis prudent to do good, while it is in the Power of our Hand to do it.

But, *Secondly*, Another Reason that may press the quick and speedy Relief of those who want, is, that the delay of so doing, continues them under their Fears and Griefs, their Wants and Miseries; and it must be a mighty Cause, which

which can excuse the delay of Relief in this Case, and much more justifie it. And therefore, the longer we needlesly delay to relieve them, after we are convinced, or may be so, if we please, of their Necessity, the more we shall expose our selves, to be answerable for what they suffer in the mean Time; and let it be remembred, that God who will be the Judge both of their Necessities and our Charity, knows the Hearts of Men, and all the several Shifts and Fallacies, whereby they are wont to deceive themselves in the Delays of doing Good.

II. I am now to explain the true meaning of this particular Caution, of not doing our Alms before Men, to be seen of them. And this will best be done, by considering; (1.) How, or in what manner, we must give our Alms. (2.) With what Designs or Ends.

(1.) I shall begin with the first, *how*, or *in what manner*, we must give our Alms. Sometimes it must be done with all the *Privacy* that is possible, and that both for their sakes to whom we give, and for our own likewise. *For their sakes*, in compliance with their Modesty and Reputation (especially, when they are such, whose Quality and Education has

been above the common Rank) left we do a Prejudice to their Credit, while we do a Charity to their Persons, and spoil the Comfort which our Gift would afford them, by mingling a Disgrace with it, and make our Bounty a Reproach, and upbraid the Poverty we relieved; so also, we must give with as much Secrecy as we can, *for our own sakes*, as well as theirs; lest we do, or seem to do, as the *Pharisees* did, sound a Trumpet before our Alms, and give to serve our own Glory, not the Necessities of our Neighbour; give to feed our own Vanity, and not the Hunger of those that want; for while Men labour thus to magnifie their Liberality in the Eyes of Men, they lessen it in the Eyes of God; not but that *sometimes* it must be done *publickly*, as when the Example may have great Influence upon others in drawing them in, to give more largely, to the greater Benefit and Advantage of the Poor, as is the Case of Subscriptions to charitable Uses, Money given at the Sacrament, Collections for Briefs, and the like. Beside, Public Charities are, generally speaking, of greater Use than Private, as extending farther, and may be done without Offence against our Saviour's Caution. For it is not the doing them *openly*, but

but doing them with a vain-glorious *Purpoſe* to be ſeen of Men, that renders our Alms defective in God's eſteem. And therefore, thoſe who excuſe themſelves from public Almſgiving, under a Pretence that they ſhould not do it openly, are guilty either of a great Prevarication, or mighty Weakneſs, either perverting or miſtaking the true Deſign of this Paragraph of our Saviour's Sermon, which brings me to the

(2.) Second Point; With what *Deſigns*, or for what *Ends*, we muſt beſtow our Alms; and theſe are in ſhort to honour God, to do Good unto our Neighbour, and to lay up Treaſure for our ſelves in Heaven.

The firſt Thing to be propounded to our ſelves in this Duty, is, the *Glory* and *Honour of God*, who takes that as given to himſelf, which we give to the Poor with Regard to him, and in Obedience to his Laws. This is evident, by the whole Tenor of our Saviour's Diſcourſe in the Twenty Fifth Chapter of St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel. *I was an hungred, and ye gave me Meat; I was thirſty, and ye gave me Drink; I was a Stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye cloathed me*, &c. *Verily I ſay unto you, in as much as ye have done it unto one of the leaſt of*

these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me. He looks upon himself, as *honoured*
Prov. 3. 9. *with our Substance, and with the Firstfruits of our encrease*; when tho' we cannot now, as the *Jews* did of old, express that Honour, in sacrificing the best of our Herds, and Flocks *before his Altar*, as Free-will Offerings, in acknowledgment of his Goodness to us, we *freely and generously relieve the Poor* out of our Estates, and make the same Acknowledgments to him, by honouring *them* as his *Receivers*. For even, while those very Rites were both accepted and required, this Duty of honouring God by Almsgiving was so much more acceptable, that it was preferred before them. Mercy was always esteem'd by God, as better than Sacrifice. He needs not any Thing from his Creatures, the World is his, and the Cattle upon a Thousand Hills, and therefore what he requires from us in Honour of him, is to communicate of the Plenty he has given us to
Heb. 13. 16. those that want. *To do good, and to communicate, forget not; for with such Sacrifices God is well pleased.*

The next Design or End we ought to have in Almsgiving, is, to *do good to the Receiver*, a Thing most necessary in this Duty to render it pleasing either to God

or

or Men, for even *Men* are not pleased with what we give, unless it apparently proceed from Kindness to them: Be the Gift it self never so beneficial to them, they cannot think themselves obliged to the Giver, if therein he aim'd at his own Credit and Reputation, or other private Interests, and gave not out of any prevailing Tenderness for *them*. And in *God's Esteem*, who eyes and values the Hearts of Men in all their Actions, and never accepts of any Thing as good, which flows not from a good Disposition; *Mercy* and *Compassion* are altogether necessary in all our Almsgiving. St. *Paul*, when he says, *Tho' I bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing*; implies, that it is possible for a Man to give all his Goods away to charitable Uses, and yet to have nothing in him of the *Principle*, or *Grace* of *Charity*: For as he may perform the outward Act of *Humility* out of *Pride* and *Ambition*, to gain the applause of Men; so doubtless, he may the outward Acts of *Beneficence* to the Poor, out of a Principle of *Ostentation*, and *Vain-glory*, so get the Credit, without either the Desire or Care of doing Good, tho' it may also have this Effect, and be a real Advantage to those to whom he

1 Cor. 13. 3.

gives. Now such a Charity, as well as such an Humility, springing only from Pride and Ostentation, is meerly Mechanical and Material; but has nothing of the Substance of true Vertue in it. Self-Love, and not Compassion to others, is at the Bottom of it; and therefore, whatsoever Good it does, that Good is accidental, and for want of an honest Principle, the Reward is lost. So says our Saviour, *Ye have your Reward*; that is, ye have the Praise of Men indeed (which is all ye aim at) but it is in vain for you to hope for any Reward hereafter.

But yet, notwithstanding all the Kindness and Compassion that is required, to purify our Intention in the Charities we bestow, thus far it is lawful to mind our selves, and to consider our own Advantage, as well as others, in this Duty. *We may justly hope to be rewarded by God for it*, and very lawfully do the Duty with an Eye, or Respect to this Reward.

1 Tim. 6. 17, 18, 19. God hath promised to reward it, *He that seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. Charge them who are rich in this World*, says St. *Paul*, *That they be ready to give, and glad to distribute, laying up in store for themselves a good Foundation against the Time to come, that they may attain Eternal Life.* And certainly it is very lawful to act

act in hope of God's Promiſes, and uſe the Rewards therein promiſed, as a Motive to diſcharge the Duty, elſe were theſe Promiſes not only uſeleſs, but even a Snare and Temptation to us.

From theſe Points well conſidered, we may have ſufficient Knowledge of what our Saviour would have us to avoid, or do, deſign, or not deſign, in the Performance of this firſt great Duty of Almſgiving.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

Of PRAYER.

MATT. VI. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15.

And when thou prayeſt, thou ſhalt not be as the Hypocrites are: for they love to pray ſtanding in the Synagogues, and in the Corners of the Streets, that they may be ſeen of Men. Verily I ſay unto you, they have their Reward.

But thou, when thou prayeſt, enter into thy Cloſet, and when thou haſt ſhut thy Door, pray to thy Father which is in ſecret, and thy Father which ſeeth in ſecret ſhall reward thee openly.

But when ye pray, uſe not vain Repetitions, as the Heathen do: for they think that they ſhall be heard for their much ſpeaking.

Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

After

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven.
Give us this Day our daily Bread.
And forgive us our Debts, as we forgive our Debters.
And lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, for ever. Amen.
For, if ye forgive Men their Treſpaſſes, your Heavenly Father will alſo forgive you.
But if ye forgive not Men their Treſpaſſes, neither will your Father forgive your Treſpaſſes.

THE ſecond Religious Duty adopted here by Chriſt into his Inſtitution, and for the better Performance of which he gives us ſome Directions, is that of *Prayer*, and what he ſays of it is in effect as follows.

"As Oſtentation ought by no means "to be your Deſign in your *Almſgiving*, "ſo neither in your *Prayers*. When "therefore ye pretend to offer up to God "your

" your private Devotions, do it in ſuch
" a manner, that they may indeed be
" private. Let no vile Affection of be-
" ing obſerv'd and talk'd of for your Pie-
" ty, lead you to chuſe ſuch Places for
" Prayer, where ye may be ſeen or heard.
" For thus the Hypocrites do, who love
" to pray in the Streets, or any where
" elſe, as much in view as poſſible, that
" their Religion may acquire them Cre-
" dit and Repute amongſt Men: and
" this, as it is their chief Deſign, is like
" to be all the Reward of ſuch Devotion.
" Do ye on the contrary, when ye ad-
" dreſs your ſelves to God in private
" Prayer, retire into your Chambers, or
" your Cloſets, ſhut to your Door, and
" contrive to be as ſecret as ye can, and
" uſe not Artifices of any kind, which
" may by an affected Chance diſcover to
" your Family or others what ye are a-
" bout. This will beſt anſwer both the
" Nature and the Ends of private Prayer;
" and God, who obſerves you in the
" moſt ſecret Retirements, and hears the
" ſofteſt Whiſpers of a genuine and ſin-
" cere Devotion, will reward you for it
" openly hereafter. Be careful alſo, when
" ye pray, to avoid a Multiplicity of uſe-
" leſs Words, and vain Enlargements,
" and impertinent Flouriſhes. Let your

" Re-

" Requeſts be few, your Expreſſions " grave, and ſhort, and comprehenſive. " Be not too minute and particular, ei- " ther in what ye ask, or in your Argu- " ments for obtaining it. The Heathens " indeed are full of vain Repetitions in " this matter, verboſe and trifling: be- " cauſe they conſider not that God is e- " very where, and at all times preſent; " they addreſs themſelves to him as if he " were a finite Being like themſelves, " and wanted an exact Information of " their Caſe; or were apt to be ſullen, " and needed abundance of Arguments " to move him; or might be prevail'd " with, as Men ſometimes are, by pom- " pous Rhetoric, or by long and artful " Orations. But this is a great Miſtake: " your Heavenly Father knows both be- " fore, and better than you your ſelves, " what things ye have need of; and is " ſufficiently enclined by his own Diſpo- " ſition to hear, when ye offer up your " Requeſts with a ſincere and decent " Modeſty. After this manner there- " fore pray ye, *Our Father*, &c.

In explaining of this Paragraph, I might and ſhould have ſaid ſomething of the *Obligation* to Prayer, as a Duty required of Chriſtians, altho' it be not here directly commanded, but only ſuppoſed and taken

taken for granted in those Words, *when thou prayest.* But because there is another whole Paragraph on this Subject, wherein Perseverance and Importunity in Prayer being required, our Obligation to Prayer it self, as a Duty, is more direct and visible; I shall confine my Thoughts here,

I. To the Consideration of the several *Sorts* or *Kinds* of Prayer.

II. To enquire into the Meaning of the two Cautions given, (1.) Against Ostentation; and, (2.) Against vain Repetitions in Prayer.

III. To make some short Observations upon that most excellent Form of Prayer which our Lord has here drawn up for us; concluding with a Paraphrase of the Prayer it self.

I. First then let us consider the *several Kinds* of Prayer. For as to the *Nature* of it, or *what Prayer is* in general, it is so well understood, that it needs no Description. The meer natural Light of Reason has taught the *Theory* of Prayer to all Men in all Ages, and the Impulse of meer natural Religion has forced even the lewdest and profanest of Mankind into the Practice of it, when they have been

been ſurprized by a ſudden Danger. We will proceed therefore to enquire into the *ſeveral Sorts* of Prayer, and they are theſe:

(1.) *Mental*, wherein the Deſire and Affections only, without Words, dart up themſelves devoutly to God, either by way of Petition or Praiſe. This is indeed wholly imperceptible, or ought to be made ſo, to Men; but highly pleaſing to God, and may be practiſed whatever Company we are in, or whatever Buſineſs we are about. An Example of this we have in our Bleſſed Maſter, who tho' we read indeed of no *Prayer* put up by him for the raiſing of *Lazarus*, we muſt conclude did ſilently by himſelf pray for it; for when they had removed the Graveſtone, he lift up his Eyes, and ſaid, *Father, I thank thee that thou haſt heard me.* John 11. 41.

(2.) *Ejaculatory*, which is a like ſhort and ſudden Sally of the Affections, but expreſſed in Words, as that of our Saviour in his Thankſgiving juſt recited, *Father, I thank thee*: And at another time, the like; *In that Hour Jeſus rejoiced in Spirit, and ſaid, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that thou haſt hid theſe things from the Wiſe and Prudent, and haſt revealed them unto Babes.* Luke 10. 21. And theſe Ejaculations alſo, if uſed only upon proper Occa-

Occaſions, and without Affectation, and from a real inward Principle of Piety, are not only accepted of God as Prayers or Praiſes, but tend to make Impreſſions of Seriouſneſs upon the Company before whom we utter them. (3.) There are *public Prayers*, when at appointed Times we meet with the Neighbourhood at the Houſe of God, the Church, to offer up in concert, by the Mouth of the Miniſter, and along with him, our Petitions and Thankſgivings, not only on our own account, but for the Community, of which we are Members, Civil and Eccleſiaſtical, and for the whole Chriſtian Church in general. This alſo is a Duty, and of no ſmall Conſequence, as might be proved at large, if I had time; but I ſhall here only take notice of that one Text, wherein the Apoſtle cautions us, that we ſhould

Heb. 10. 25. *not forſake the aſſembling of our ſelves together, as the manner of ſome* profane and careleſs Chriſtians was then and ſtill *is*, to the Scandal of their Profeſſion. (4.) There are *Family Prayers*, when we call thoſe together who are under our peculiar Care, to put up their joint Requeſts for ſuch Bleſſings, ſpiritual and temporal, as are requiſite for them as a Family, and to praiſe God for the Protection and Mercies we have received from

from him in that Capacity. And this too has been the conſtant Practice of Good Men in all Ages; and the Reaſon of the thing ſufficiently ſpeaks both for the Piety and the Neceſſity of it. (5.) But laſtly, there are *private Prayers*, wherein, retiring into ſome ſecret Place, apart from all Company, and in the Eye of none but God, we ſeriouſly and devoutly addreſs our ſelves to him for ſuch Mercies as concern our own perſonal State, not forgetting alſo our particular Friends, and others whom we are bound to pray for. I have reſerved this to the laſt Place, becauſe it is that very kind of Prayer, which our Lord eſpecially mentions, and directs, in theſe Verſes of his Sermon now before us. And indeed there is too much Occaſion it ſhould be preſſed upon the Conſciences of Men as a Duty: for 'tis juſtly to be fear'd, that there are many who go to the public Worſhip of God, and yet neglect the ſecret Devotions they ought to perform at home. I doubt there are too many Chriſtians, who have ſtill ſo much of the Phariſee in them, that willingly ſhew themſelves in ſuch Duties wherein their Religion may be ſeen of Men, and wherein they may ſerve their Credit and Reputation; but diſpenſe with themſelves in Duties which are required to be ſo pri-

vate, as only to be obſerved by God, and which can have no other Principle than Conſcience and true Piety. Here therefore we have an expreſs Command for *Cloſet Prayer*: *When thou prayeſt, enter into thy Cloſet; and when thou haſt ſhut thy Door, pray to thy Father which is in ſecret, &c.* By *Cloſet* is meant any private Place, where we may be ſecure of being neither ſeen, overheard, nor interrupted in our Devotions. And to ſome ſuch Convenience ſhould every Chriſtian retire, at leaſt twice a day, Morning and Evening, for that Exerciſe; which has not only been the conſtant Practice of Good Men, but has the Example of Chriſt himſelf to recommend it, as we may gather from the following Paſſage. St. *Mark* tells us of
Mark 1. 31. him, that in the *Morning riſing up a great while before Day, he went out into a ſolitary Place, and there prayed.* And St.
Mat. 14. 23. *Matthew*, that *when he had ſent away the Multitudes, he went up into a Mountain apart to pray; and when the Evening was come, he was there alone.* The *Reaſon* of ſuch a Practice alſo pleads for it as a Duty. For what can be more reaſonable than to begin the Day with a pious and devout Adoration of that Infinite Being, upon which we continually depend for all the Neceſſaries and Comforts of

of Life, to praiſe him for his Protection of us the paſt Night, and to implore his Grace to conduct us through the Temptations, and his Bleſſing to proſper us in the Buſineſs of the Day before us? And in like manner to conclude it, when we are going to Reſt, with thankful Acknowledgments of his Mercy, beſeeching him to pardon the Sins we have been guilty of, and humbly recommending our ſelves, and all that belong to us, to be kept ſafe by his Providence the enſuing Night? And that this ſhould be done in ſecret by our ſelves, as well as at Church with the Congregation, is highly proper, becauſe the public Service being to ſuit the Caſe of others, as well as our own, muſt be performed only in general Terms; whereas we have every one of us, when we conſider our own ſpiritual or temporal Circumſtances, ſome things particularly to beg of God, that may be ſuitable thereto, and on which we may enlarge in private Prayer, as there is Occaſion. Our Confeſſions of Sin ſhould alſo be more particular in ſecret, than the Terms in public Service will admit; our Petitions for Grace againſt this or that prevailing Sin, and our Thankſgivings for ſuch Mercies as we eſpecially have received, ſhould be ſo too, and have more room to be ſo

in our Closets than in public. In a word, this part of Religion, I mean secret Prayer, is so natural, so rational, so necessary, that it will be hard to suppose any Christian, who neglects it, to have the Fear or Love of God in his Heart, or any due Belief or Sense of his Dependance upon him. Being assured therefore that secret Prayer is a Duty, which every one of us owes to God, let us now consider,

II. Those two Cautions our Saviour here interposes in the Performance of it: (1.) Against Ostentation. (2.) Against vain Repetitions.

(1.) Against *Ostentation.* The Hypocrites in our Saviour's Time were used to run into some Corner of the Temple, or of the Streets, or other Places of Concourse, and there with Hands and Eyes lifted up, perform what they called their private Prayers; to the intent, that being observed by the Multitude, their wondrous Piety might be talked of: And thus while they pretended to pay their Homage to God, they were in truth idolatrously worshipping themselves; or praying to the People for Reputation, rather than to him for Mercy; and settling a Fund for their own Praises, upon the foot of his. Now this being an odious Mockery

kery of God, our Saviour teſtifies his Abhorrence of it, and requires us to affect *Secrecy* in *our* Prayers, as much as they did *Openneſs* and *Obſervation:* that we ſhould not only *not deſire* to be ſeen of Men, when we perform them; but alſo *ſtudiouſly contrive to avoid it*, by a ſtrict and cloſe Retirement. Nor is the Choice of a private *Place* for our private Devotions, all that is included: there are many little Arts of Vanity, which Hypocrites make uſe of to defeat the Intention of the Letter. They will contrive perhaps to be *overheard* at their Prayers, tho' they will not be *ſeen* at them; or by ſome lucky Hints in Converſation they will take care it ſhall be known how ſtrict they are in ſecret Duties, and the like. But all theſe Arts, whatever they be, (for Hypocriſy has a thouſand ſly Devices) are equally condemned by the Reaſon and Spirit of this Caution; and 'tis the part of our Conſciences to admoniſh us faithfully of them, that we do not deceive our ſelves. Not that it is a Sin, after all, to *uſe our Voices* in Cloſet Prayers, tho' 'tis poſſible by that means we may be overheard in it. But when this or the like is done *of purpoſe to be diſcovered*, when we pray alone in our Cloſets, *with a deſign* to be overheard; or leave a Door unfaſten'd, *in*

hopes to be surprized and seen; or mention our Prayers in Company, *with an Intention* of Vanity and Ostentation: *This* is the Sin we are here cautioned against.

Now tho' what has been said was chiefly spoken at first of *personal* and *private Prayer*, as distinguish'd from the other Kinds; and tho' it is in the Nature of the thing most immediately applicable thereto; yet in those *other Kinds* of Prayer we are as much obliged to avoid whatsoever is really Ostentation, as in this. We must *go to the Church* to worship God in public (and the oftner we go the better;) consequently our Devotions must be seen there; and probably our devout and frequent Attendance *may be commended* too: But if we go to Church *for that very end*, to gain our selves a Reputation, and to draw the Praises of Men upon us; if, when we are there, we *contrive* to be taken notice of by *affected* Gestures of Devotion, a louder Voice than others, or the like; 'tis Ostentation and Hypocrisy. Tho' *Family Prayers* are to be used, and whatever happens, we are not to be ashamed of them; yet Conscience towards God, and the promoting Religion in our Families, ought to be their only Principle. If therefore we *proclaim* and *boast of* them, if we chuse such a public Room in

in our Houſes to perform them in, as that we may be *eaſily overheard* by the Neighbourhood, or pray *very loud on purpoſe* that we may be ſo; 'tis ſtill Hypocriſy and Oſtentation. *Ejaculatory* Prayers are good upon proper Occaſions, and at proper Times; but if we are venting them at every turn, and do really *affect* them in Company, to be thought devout; that wretched Mixture of Vanity makes them criminal to us. And ſo our *Mental* Prayers, which as they are formed only in the Heart, ſhould be ſent up from thence in a ſerious, but in a ſilent unobſerved Devotion; if by any outward Poſtures and Actions we *contrive to diſcover* them to thoſe about us, we loſe the Religion in the Oſtentation of them. In ſhort, of whatever Kind our Prayers are, if we deſign any thing elſe but God and true Religion, we profane the Sacrifices of the Lord, to whom alone is due the whole Intention of ſuch Acts of Worſhip; and whatever we may get of the Praiſe of Men in this World, we have nothing to expect, but the Portion of Hypocrites hereafter.

(2.) The ſecond Caution which our Saviour here gives us, is againſt *vain Repetitions*. He neither ſays, nor can his Meaning be, that we ſhould uſe no Repe-

titions at all; for we have many Instances to the contrary in *David*'s Psalms; and we have the Example of our Saviour too, who in his Agony in the Garden *prayed thrice, saying the same Words.* But we are forbid such Repetitions as are *vain* and *needless*, such as the *Heathens* used, who thought their Gods would the rather hearken to them for their much speaking; such a *minute descending to Particulars* in our Prayers, as if that infinite Being we pray to, did not know our Case, till we our selves inform him fully of it; such a *Multiplicity* of Words to express *one and the same* Request, as if he were liable to mistake us, and could not apprehend what we desire, without laborious Explications; such *Flourishes of Rhetorick*, and such a *Profusion of Arguments* to enforce it, as if he were to be deceived or flattered into Compliance, or did not consider the Reasonableness of what we ask, or were not inclined to do us good without much Perswasion. Thus indeed it is sometimes necessary to apply our selves to *Men*, who tho' they should be able to help us, may not know our Wants, or may not readily apprehend us; or tho' they do, may perhaps be unwilling, and need to be perswaded: But God has none of these Imperfections and Weaknesses; he understands

ſtands our Neceſſities better than we do our ſelves; he knows both how and when to help us, and from the infinite Compaſſion of his Nature, is more ready of himſelf to help, than we are to deſire he ſhould. For this Reaſon *Solomon* diſcreetly adviſes us againſt much talking in our Prayers. *God is in Heaven, and thou upon Earth, therefore let thy Words be few.* Eccleſ. 5. 2. And our Saviour cautions us in this Paragraph againſt *vain Repetitions.* Whatever is not requiſite to *heighten* our Devotions, or whatever is uſed meerly to lengthen them, and whatever may imply, or ſeem to ſuppoſe any of the beforementioned Weakneſſes and Imperfections in God, are the Repetitions here condemn'd. In oppoſition to which our Lord has preſcribed us a Form or Pattern of Prayer, extreamly ſhort, and yet expreſſive and ſignificant of every thing in general Terms, which we can or ought to deſire. Some perhaps will ſay, If God knows our Wants, and will ſupply them, of what Uſe is Prayer? Why ſhould we pray at all? To which we may anſwer, that as Thanks and Praiſe are not required of us, as bringing any Profit to God; his Glory and Honour are the ſame, however neglectful we may be of our Duty; ſo neither is Prayer required as neceſſary for the conveying

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any Knowledge of our Wants to God, or perſwading him to relieve them; but as an Exerciſe of our Faith, and an Acknowledgment of our conſtant Dependance upon him. As he who does not give Thanks for the Benefits he receives, is not worthy of them; ſo likewiſe he who does not deſire and ask a Bleſſing, does not deſerve to have it beſtow'd upon him. This therefore being the Ground and Reaſon of Prayer, not the laying open our Wants before God by way of Information, or the prevailing with him by florid Arguments to help us; but the reducing to Practice an humble and believing Senſe of his Power, his Goodneſs, and his other Attributes, and of our own Dependance upon him; it will appear in the Nature of the thing, that Prayer it ſelf is ſtill neceſſary, becauſe 'tis decent, reaſonable, and commanded; and yet that Abundance of Words in Prayer is needleſs, as by the Caution here 'tis alſo ſinful; I will now proceed,

III. In the third place, to make ſome ſhort and general Obſervations from this Divine Platform and Example of Prayer, which our Lord has left us; and they ſhall be theſe that follow.

(1.) That

(1.) That a Form of Prayer is lawful, not only in our public Services, but in our private Devotions too. Our Saviour is ſpeaking here of ſecret or cloſet Prayer, and he bids us pray οὕτως, thus, *Our Father*, &c. that is, either *in theſe Words* (for the Prayer it ſelf is expreſly delivered as a Form, *Luke* 11. 2.) or *after this manner*, which will imply not only that we ſhould put up thoſe or the like Petitions, but that we ſhould, or may at leaſt, pray alſo in a *prepared Form of Words*, as this which he gives us for a Pattern is.

(2.) That *Brevity* is moſt proper and moſt acceptable in our Devotions; not but that upon particular Occaſions, ſpiritual or temporal, we may enlarge, as the Fervency of our Minds, or the Neceſſity of the Benefits we pray for, may excite us: for long Prayers are not ſinful meerly as they are long, but as they are *lengthened out of a vain Notion* of being more *acceptable to God* thereby, or as they are *ſpun out by impertinent, needleſs, and affected Repetitions.*

(3.) That the Method of the Lord's Prayer is not ſtrictly and to the utmoſt Niceneſs binding, yet *in general* it is: that is, we ſhould begin with a decent and devout Preface, and end with a like ſolemn Concluſion, and order the Matter as well as the Manner of Petitions, in ſome general

general Proportion, to the Directory here given us, as particularly,

(4.) That our Desire of *Spiritual* Blessings should take up more room in our Hearts and Devotions than of temporal. There is here but one short Petition for the Necessaries of this present Life, *Give us this Day our daily Bread:* but there are two which regard our spiritual State, *viz.* for the Forgiveness of our past Sins, and the preserving from Sin for the future.

(5.) That *what tends immediately to the Glory of God* in the World, should be the chief Subject of our Prayers, and most regarded in them. Here are but six Petitions in all; and the three first (which have the Precedence, as of more Concern than the other) do especially relate to the Glory and Honour of *God*, as, *Hallowed be thy Name*; *Thy Kingdom come*; *Thy Will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven.*

(6.) That we should pray for *others*, as well as for *our selves*; for it runs in the Plural Number, *Our* Father; Give *us* this Day *our* daily Bread; Forgive *us our* Trespasses; Lead *us* not into Temptation; Deliver *us* from Evil.

(7.) That *Praises*, and particular Adoration and Acknowledgment of God's *Power*, and other Glorious Attributes, should be join'd with all our Prayers. So here,

here, Our Father *which art in Heaven. For thine is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

(8.) We muſt obſerve, that tho' the *Interceſſion* and *Merits of Chriſt* are not here pleaded or mentioned (becauſe Chriſt had not then ſuffered upon the Croſs, nor aſcended into Heaven to enter upon his Mediatorial Interceſſion for us, when he preſcribed this Form of Prayer;) yet we learn abundantly from other Places in the New Teſtament, that we muſt *put up all our Prayers through him, and in his Name*, not hoping to be accepted on any other Terms; and indeed he himſelf inſtructs us elſewhere of the Neceſſity of this, when he tells us, *Whatſoever ye ſhall ask of the Father in my Name, he will give it you.* John 16. 23. & 15. 16. Having drawn theſe general Obſervations, and that in as ſmall a Compaſs as was poſſible, it now remains only that I conclude with a ſhort Paraphraſe of the Lord's Prayer; and the rather *ſhort*, becauſe it would not be proper to make a long one, ſince the Prayer it ſelf was deſigned as a Pattern of Brevity and Conciſeneſs in our Devotions; and yet every Word being ſo very copious and expreſſive, it muſt be ſuch a Paraphraſe, as may give us at leaſt a general Notion of the Extent and Meaning of each Sentence in it.

" Moſt

" Moſt Glorious God, the Creator and
" Sovereign of all things, the Father of
" our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, and in him, by
" Adoption and Grace, the Father of all
" true Chriſtians, infinite in Compaſ-
" ſion towards them, and infinitely pow-
" erful, as well as ready to grant, what-
" ever is fit for them to ask: May thy
" Name be every where adored with the
" profoundeſt Reverence; thy Power,
" thy Wiſdom, thy Juſtice, thy Mercy,
" and all thy other glorious Attributes,
" which thou diſplayeſt not only in Hea-
" ven, but from thence over all the World,
" be acknowledged with humble Awe
" and Admiration, Fear and Love, by
" all Mankind. Let thy Holy Spirit rule
" in our Hearts, ſubdue our Corruptions,
" and engage our Affections to a moſt
" willing Obedience to thy Laws: Let
" all Nations be enlightened with a true
" Knowledge of Thee, and of *Jeſus Chriſt*
" whom thou haſt ſent: Let the Heathen
" become his Inheritance, and the utter-
" moſt Parts of the Earth his Poſſeſſion;
" and in thy due time compleat the Num-
" ber of the Elect, and bring us all to thy
" everlaſting Kingdom of Glory. Shou
" down upon us ſuch Influences of th
" holy Spirit, as may enable us to ſubm
" cheerfully to thy Will in every thin

" an

" and obey thy Commands faithfully,
" with the ſame Readineſs, Sincerity,
" and Delight, as the Angels do in Hea-
" ven. Vouchſafe to beſtow upon us
" this Day, whatever thy Divine Wiſ-
" dom (which beſt knows what is fit for
" us) ſhall ſee neceſſary to the Support
" of our Bodies, to the Advantage of our
" Affairs, to the Comfort of our Minds,
" and above all to the ſpiritual Benefit of
" our Souls. Pardon all our Sins, and
" for the ſake of *Jeſus Chriſt*, lay not
" upon us the Puniſhment for them
" which we deſerve: Forgive us, Gra-
" cious Lord, as we in obedience to thy
" Command, are heartily ready to for-
" give all ſuch as have injured or offend-
" ed us. Remove far from us whatever
" may prove an Occaſion of Sin, or a
" Temptation to it; or at leaſt, ſupply
" us by thy Holy Spirit with Strength
" and Reſolution effectually to overcome
" all Temptations. Deliver us from Sin,
" that worſt of Evils which can befal us;
" and from the Devil, the Author of it:
" that his malicious Subtlety may not be
" ſuffered to draw us into Wickedneſs,
" nor his malicious Power be allowed to
" hurt us here, or to triumph in our
" Damnation and Miſery hereafter. All
" this we beg, moſt Gracious Lord, as

" acknow-

" acknowledging that thine is the King-
" dom; thou only haſt Right to the Ado-
" ration and Service of all thy Crea-
" tures; thine is the Power, thou over-
" ruleſt all things both in Heaven and
" Earth, and canſt do abundantly above
" whatever we can ask or think; and
" thine is the Glory, the Praiſe of all
" Good things we have enjoy'd already,
" or do now enjoy; the Glory of thy
" Grace in our Redemption, and in the
" Conduct of thy faithful Servants hi-
" therto by thy Word and Spirit, is ex-
" ceeding great; the Glory of thy Provi-
" dence is magnified in all Events from
" the Beginning of Time, and may the
" Glory of both be given thee in the
" moſt thankful Praiſes and Hallelujahs
" to all Eternity. Amen.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

Of Faſting.

MATT. VI. 16, 17, 18.

Moreover, when ye faſt, be not as the Hypocrites, of a ſad Countenance: For they diſfigure their Faces, that they may appear unto Men to faſt. Verily I ſay unto you, they have their Reward.

But thou, when thou faſteſt, anoint thine Head, and waſh thy Face:

That thou appear not unto Men to faſt, but unto thy Father which is in ſecret: And thy Father which ſeeth in ſecret, ſhall reward thee openly.

THE Laſt of the Three great religious Duties, in the Performance of which our Lord cautions us againſt Oſtentation, or a deſire of Applauſe, is that of *Faſt-*

ing, and the Caution is delivered in Words to this Effect.

" Likewise, when by religious Fasts " and Mortifications, ye pretend to im- " prove Devotion, or discipline your " selves to Vertue, beware that these " excellent Purposes be not corrupted by " a mixture of Vain-glory, which will " turn the whole into a Scene of gross " Hypocrisy. Shew not your selves a- " broad, at such a Time, with any af- " fected Gloominess or Dejecton in your " Looks, or any formal Singularities in " your Air, or Gate, or Dress, to draw " the Neighbourhood into an Opinion of " your extraordinary Sanctity, and se- " vere and mortified Lives. For if ye " thus affect the Praise of Men, those " empty Praises are all the Reward ye are " like to meet with. God sees through " and despises, and abhors these little " Arts of Ostentation, however Men may " be deceived by them, and will condemn " you at the last as Hypocrites. Let your " Fasting therefore be, as it ought to be, " a pure and simple act of Religion; and " as such, make it as private in the Per- " formance as ye can; appear outward- " ly as at other Times, with the same " Easiness and Freedom in your Mein " and Countenance, the same Decency

" and

" and Neatneſs in your Dreſs; that " Men may not be able to diſtinguiſh " when ye faſt, and when ye do not. " 'Tis enough, that God obſerves you: " Humble your ſelves in ſecret before " him only, and he will publickly re- " ward you for it, before Men and " Angels, at the great Day of Recom- " pence.

Now voluntary Faſting, tho' not directly commanded in this Place, yet from what our Saviour here ſays about it, may be ſuppoſed to be a Chriſtian Duty. I ſhall therefore conſider,

I. The Duty of Faſting in general, as a Duty required under the Chriſtian Diſpenſation.
II. The Ends and Uſefulneſs of Faſting.
III. The proper Meaſures of this Duty.

I. Let us conſider the Duty of Faſting, as a Chriſtian Duty. It may be ſaid, that however our Lord was pleaſed to excuſe his Diſciples from Faſting, whileſt he was with them upon Earth, yet he aſſures thoſe of *John* the *Baptiſt*, and that in the hearing of his own Diſciples, that there ſhould come a Time Mat. 9. 14, 15.

when they should fast, and that not only for want of necessary Supplies to satisfie their Hunger and Thirst, which was their Case very often; and which some Interpreters would have to be the Meaning of our Saviour's Answer there, but by voluntary and religious Fasting, which certainly is the more proper Sense of the Words: For doubtless the Question was proposed concerning such Fasting, as the Disciples of *John* and the *Pharisees* observed, either voluntarily of themselves, or by Direction and Institution of their several Sects; but they knew very well, that the Disciples of Christ did not observe Fasts, so that if he thought fit to answer their Question appositely, when he said, that they should fast, he must mean *religious Fasting*, and so no doubt his Disciples understood him: For after his Ascension into Heaven, when the Apostles to whom he had committed the Care and Government of the Church, began to enter upon that Holy Ministry, they thought themselves obliged to observe this Duty of Fasting, as soon as there was a proper Occasion for it. It does not appear to be required of them by any express Command, nor was there any need for it, the *Jews* being well accustomed to Fasting upon all proper Occasions.

caſions. Thus *David* faſted, when he beſought the Lord for the Child that was born to him, by the Wife of *Uriah*. And St. *Luke* relates of *Annah* a devout Woman, that notwithſtanding her very great Age, ſhe departed not from the Temple, but ſerved God with Faſtings and Prayers Night and Day: And many other Inſtances might be given, by which it would appear, that the *Jews* were eaſily diſpoſed to this Duty; it being a common Notion amongſt them, that in the Time of Affliction and Suffering, or for the obtaining of ſome great Bleſſing, they ought to humble themſelves, and to pray, which was very properly accompany'd with Faſting. Nor was it the Notion of the *Jews* only, but of all the *Eaſtern* Nations. How readily did the King of *Nineveh*, appoint a Faſt upon the threatning of *Jonah*, altho' a ſtranger Prophet, and a Meſſenger from a God whom they did not worſhip; and how ſolemn, how ſtrict, how univerſal was that Faſt? If it be objected, that this was probably done by the Prophet's Direction, and in Obedience to him only, for that Faſting being an hardſhip upon Human Nature, ſeems not to have been the Dictate of meer natural Religion: Let us enquire into the Pra-

ctice of other Nations, such as *India* and *China*, in the remotest Parts of the *East*, who could have no Communication with the *Jews*, nor have any Thing of Divine Revelation to guide them; and we shall find, that their Philosophers and Sects of devout Persons, not only taught them many useful Maxims of Government, and Rules of Life: But exercised, and do still practise such Instances of Mortification, and particularly Fasting, as might appear incredible, if they were not attested by Eye-witnesses of good Authority; and by this it is evident, that however these Austerities seem a Violence upon Nature, yet they have been practised, as the Dictates of natural Religion, and not by Imitation only of the *Jewish* Discipline. Religious Fasting being therefore a Practice of all Nations, and in all Ages, as well before, as in our Saviour's Time; no wonder, that he should adopt it into his Religion, as a Duty to be observed by all his Followers. And accordingly St. *Paul* says of himself, in his Second Epistle to the *Corinthians*, that he was *in*
2 Cor. 11. 27. *Fastings often.* By which, having just before mentioned Hunger and Thirst, that other sort of Fasting upon necessity and want; 'tis plain, he means such voluntary Fasting, as he thought fit, to

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enjoin himſelf the better to diſpoſe him to pray for that Grace and Aſſiſtance, which was requiſite to enable him to perform his Duty, and to bear his Sufferings. And as he performed this Duty himſelf, ſo doubtleſs he required the Practice of it in all the Churches he planted, as the other Apoſtles did in theirs; for frequent Faſting was an early Practice in the Chriſtian Churches, as the firſt Eccleſiaſtical Writers inform us. And tho' it did by Degrees degenerate into Superſtition, and new and ſtrange Auſterities were added, and many impertinent and burdenſome Niceties in the Obſervation; and then Men began to be proud of their Humiliations, to place all Holineſs, if not all Religion in the Performance of ſuch mechanical Injunctions, and to fancy that they *merited* at the Hands of God thereby: Yet this Superſtition, theſe vain Additions and falſe Notions being purged away from it at the Reformation, our Church diſcreetly and piouſly continued the uſe of Faſting, in ſuch manner as our Saviour and the Apoſtles left it, and it is ſtill as neceſſary a Duty, and as expedient to the proper Ends of it as ever.

II. Our Second Enquiry therefore is to be for what *Ends* and *Uses* in Religion Fasting was appointed, and how it may be serviceable to the encrease of Piety and Vertue: For what has been so generally practised by good Men, must be supposed to have a Tendency to some good Purpose; and having always had a place amongst religious Duties, it may be taken for granted, that when duly performed, it ministers to some religious Ends. Now these are Three, (1.) To raise and quicken our Devotions; (2.) To humble and punish our selves for Sin; and, (3.) To bring our sensual Appetites and Lusts, under a due Subjection for the future.

(1.) *To raise and quicken our Devotions.* When the Stomach is loaded, the Fumes and Vapours arising thence, are apt to cloud the Head, to dissipate the Powers of the Mind, and clog the Affections; especially, with regard to such spiritual Exercises, as Prayer and Meditation, wherein the Mind should wholly draw it self off from this World, and exert it self with the utmost Fervency and Vigour towards Heaven. Now Fasting, as it takes away those Impediments, gives greater Freedom to Contemplation,

on, more Vivacity to our Apprehension of Things Spiritual, more Scope to a devout and pious Soul to exert it self, by how much the less the sensual Appetites are indulged. And therefore, tho' Prayer is a Duty every Day, and so *cannot* always be attended with Fasting; and tho' it is more especially and abundantly to be exercised on the Lord's Day, which being a Day of spiritual Rejoicing to Christians, they *ought not* then to fast; yet the Prudence of good Men has ever taught them, when they have had *extraordinary* Occasions for Prayer, and have set a-part any of their common Days for that Exercise, *to join Fasting* with it, that they might with greater Application and Intenseness pour out their Souls before God, and keep their Hearts more closely to a religious Frame, and keep their Heads as clear as possible, for the important Business they are engaged in. This then is the first End of Fasting.

(2.) The Second is, to *humble and afflict our selves for Sin.* When our Consciences, awakened by the Grace, or startled by some angry Providence of God, into a deep Sense of Guilt (either the Guilt of *all our Sins* in general, or of any *particular very grievous Sin*, that lies heavy upon us) are led to a godly Sorrow and Repen-

Repentance, and we are earnestly desirous of making our Peace with God through Christ, by an humble Confession, condemning our selves for what we have done amiss, and casting our selves upon his infinite Mercy for a Pardon. I say, when the Case is thus with us, what can be a more proper Way to express our inward Trouble of our Minds, or at least more natural to go along with it, than such a neglect of our Bodies, as Fasting, which is the common Effect of extraordinary Grief, even upon any secular Occasion? What can be more decent, than thus to shew an Holy Indignation at our selves for having offended God, or thus to revenge upon our selves, the former sinful Indulgence of our Lusts and Appetites? How fit is it, that that Body by which we have been so oft led into Sin, should have its share in the Sorrow, and should smart under the Discipline of Repentance? How reasonable and prudent for us to *Judge our selves, that we should not be judged*, to embrace a voluntary Punishment, by the Severities of Mortification; that we may be comforted hereafter, when those whose Sins sat easy upon them in this World shall be tormented? I would not be mistaken here, as if I thought that *Fasting*, or

or any other Mortifications for Sin, would *attone for it* in the sight of God, and *merit* Pardon for it at his Hands, for certainly nothing but the Blood of Christ can do that; but I speak of them only, as proper Testimonies of the Truth and Depth of our Repentance, of our hatred of Sin, and abhorrence of our selves for it; all which together may recommend us by way of *Fitness* and *Preparation*, not by way of Merit, to such an Interest in the Mercies of God through Christ, as will at last save us. And to such an use has Fasting always been applied by good Men, in their private Humiliations for Sin; and by the Authority of religious Governments, when they have appointed public and solemn Fasts, to deplore the Sins of the Nation, to avert the Wrath and Judgments of God, and to qualify themselves for any special Blessing they have to beg of him. But,

(3.) There is yet a farther use of Fasting: For it may look not only *backward*, as expressive of a deep Remorse for Sins already past; but *forward* also, to *bring our sensual Appetites and Lusts under a due Subjection for the future.* When *Adam* was in his State of Innocence, the sensual Part of Man was under the Government of his Reason, and that was guided

ded by Religion: But the Corruption of our Nature by his Fall, so overthrew the Order of Things, that the *Faculties of the Soul*, having rebelled against Religion, were justly left themselves to be enslaved by the inferior Appetites of the Body; and now, as this or the other Humour prevails in the Blood and Animal Spirits, our Inclinations violently lead us, and our Reason is not able to controul them, and the small still Voice of Religion is not to be heard in such a Tumult. Hence Lust and Intemperance are continually prompting Men, and too often prevail with them; and the Love of Ease and Pleasure (even in those who are otherwise good Men) make them *somewhat Listless to Religion*, and very much unqualify them to *suffer Hardships* for a good Conscience, if they should be called to it. Now Fasting goes a great way to rectify all these Disorders. By keeping the Blood cool, and the Spirits at a moderate pitch, it reduces the Body to a governable Temper, and gives the Powers of Reason opportunity to exert themselves, and when-ever Reason can be heard, Religion will. By retrenching Luxury and Excess in Eating, and Drinking, it starves irregular Lust, which is cherished by nothing more than

those

thoſe Indulgences. By frequently uſing Men to croſs their ſenſual Deſires and Appetites, and to put themſelves under voluntary Hardſhips, it wears off that Tenderneſs and Delicacy that ſo ill becomes the manly Conſtitution of a Chriſtian, enures them to bear much greater Difficulties, that may happen to be laid upon them, weans them from the Affectation of Eaſe and Pleaſure, renders that eminent Duty of Self-denial familiar to them, and ſo mortifies them to the World and its Enjoyments, that their Minds are more ſpiritualized, their Reliſh of Religion, and a Life to come is heightened, and whatever Croſſes, and Afflictions, and Perſecutions they meet with in their way to Heaven, they have little Power to move them. For theſe Reaſons St. *Paul* took care by Faſtings and Mortifications *to keep his Body under, and bring it under Subjection.* And has adviſed us alſo of the Neceſſity of it. *For if ye live after the Fleſh, ye ſhall die; but if ye through the Spirit, do mortify the Deeds of the Body, ye ſhall live.* And thus the Primitive Chriſtians prepared themſelves for Perſecution, by beginning it firſt upon themſelves, in a courſe of ſevere and frequent Mortifications. I have now done with the Ends of Faſting,

1 Cor. 9. 27.

Rom. 8. 13.

ing, and shall proceed to consider,

III. The proper *Measures* of this Duty. And here I must observe in general, that Fasting does not only imply the refusing our ordinary Sustenance, and Refreshments of Eating and Drinking, but includes also a declining of *secular Pleasures* and *Gratifications*, of every other sort for the Time, so as to render the Mortification uniform, and to humble the Vanity of our Minds, as well as curb the Appetites of the Body, and both these in Proportion to that kind of Fasting, which we perceive to be necessary for our Purpose: I add this last Clause, because Fasting is of two Kinds, the one severe, but short; the other moderate, but long continued.

Isa. 58. 3.

The *First* is Fasting in the strictest Propriety of the Word; when for a whole Day, or much the greatest Part of it, we reject *all use* of Meats, and Drink, and Pleasures, retiring from the World, and confining our selves to religious Meditation, and to devout and fervent Prayer, with a due Attendance on the Worship of God in public, if we can have the Opportunity. In this strict manner should be kept those general and solemn Fasts, appointed by Authority for national Humiliation

miliation and Repentance; attending at Church both Parts of the Day, to lament before God our own and the Nations Sins, and to implore thoſe public Bleſſings, which we are called to pray for at that Time; ſpending the reſt of the Day in the like pious Offices at home, and eating nothing (if our Conſtitutions will bear it) till the Evening. This ſort of Faſting alſo may in ſome Caſes by a Parity of Reaſon be proper and requiſite for private Perſons, when their Conſciences being burdened with Remorſe for ſome particular and grievous Sin, or with a deep Senſe of all their Sins in general, they deſire to perform a ſpecial Act of Repentance and Self-revenge, and to make their Peace with God thereupon. Or, when they lie under any great Affliction, and would ſollicite more earneſtly the removal of it; or fear any great impending Evil, and would avert it, or are deſirous of any Bleſſing from Heaven of very great Conſequence to them, and would exert their utmoſt Fervour and Devotion in praying for it. But if (as in ſome Conſtitutions it may ſo happen) this ſtrict and total Faſting may prove an hindrance to their Devotion, Prudence join'd with Piety muſt direct them what to do; for after all,

Faſt-

Fasting is in this Case (I mean, when intended as an help to Prayer) no more than a ministerial or assisting Duty; and if it hinder, instead of helping, is no Duty at all.

The *Second* Sort of Fasting is a *Course of Abstinence* continued for several Days together, wherein we confine our Appetites not within the Bounds of Temperance only (for this is always a Duty,) but of *Self-denial* and *Mortification*, to a *very sparing Use* of Meats and Drink, as to the Quantity, and a choice of the *plainest*, *coursest*, and *least agreeable* sorts of them, as to the Quality; with a general *disregard of Pleasure and Diversions* the whole Time, or at least a very tender and cautious Admittance of them, and an industrious Care to sit as loose to them as possible. It is not requisite here (as it is in Fasting properly so called) to spend all the Interests of our Time in acts of Religion and Devotion, tho' it may be fit to intersperse it with *more frequent* returns of Prayer than ordinary, according to our spiritual Occasions; but we ought always to accompany *this sort* of Fasting, as well as the other, with a particular Disposition to Penitence and Piety, a strict Watchfulness over our Appetites and Passions; and a constant Diligence in

in obſerving our own Weakneſs, and a ſtudiouſneſs of all proper Ways and Means to get the Maſtery over them. Now that ſuch an *Abſtinence* as this, ſo regulated and ſo attended, may not improperly bear the Name of *Faſting*, is plain; both, becauſe in the Language of Holy Scripture, it is ſometimes call'd ſo (for ſo muſt all thoſe Places be underſtood, that ſpeak of *Faſting ſeveral Days together*, except in the Caſe of *Moſes*, *Elijah*, and *Chriſt*, who were ſupported by ſpecial Miracle:) And becauſe it really anſwers ſome of the great *Ends* of Faſting *as much*, and ſome others of them *more effectually*, than all the ſtrictneſs that can be on one ſingle Day. It may ſerve to compoſe the Mind to Prayer, and to excite Devotion in thoſe, who cannot bear a ſtrict and total Faſt, but would be hindred by it. It tends to Humiliation, Repentance, and Reformation of Life, as it tends to Mortification. And indeed, this laſt is the peculiar uſe of it. For Mortification is not to be the work of now and then a Day, but requires long Abſtinence, and repeated Reſtraints to effect it, as it ſhould be. The Church therefore has ſet a-part the Forty Days of *Lent*, as an annual returning Seaſon for it; and were this Seaſon duly ſo imploy'd, it

would be found by Experience, to contribute very much, by the Grace and Bleſſing of God, to the reducing our ſenſual Luſts, and bringing our bodily Appetites under Government, to the drawing of our Affections from this World, the mortifying us to ſecular and vain Pleaſures, and the making us more ſerious and devout in our Religion. Having thus conſidered the Meaſures of Faſting, as applicable and proper to the ſeveral Ends and Uſes of it, I ſhall only add farther on this Head, that no certain Meaſures of it can be *univerſally* laid down, as obligatory *to all:* Every Perſon, who is ſo well diſpoſed, as to practiſe it in any meaſure, muſt be left to regulate the particular Manner and Frequency of it, as Age and Strength, and Conſtitution, are able to bear. For tho' we are required to mortify the Deeds of the Body, our Religion does not put ſuch hardſhips upon us, as may deſtroy the Body it ſelf.

I have ſaid nothing here, except in the Paraphraſe at the beginning of that *Oſtentation* in this Duty of Faſting, which our Saviour particularly cautions us againſt. And I think I need not; that Crime being altogether the ſame in its Nature, in this, as in the two former

mer Articles of Alms and Prayer; and having ſpoken of it there, I ſhould but repeat the ſame again, if I conſider it afreſh under this Head of Faſting The Paraphraſe therefore ſhall ſuffice for that; and I will proceed to the next Part of this excellent Sermon on the *Mount*.

CHAP. XI.

Of not laying up Treaſures upon Earth, but of laying them up in Heaven, and of Truſt in God's Providence.

MATT. VI. 19,20,21,22,23,24, 25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33.

Lay not up for your ſelves Treaſures upon Earth, where Moth and Ruſt doth corrupt, and where Thieves break through and ſteal.

But lay up for your ſelves Treaſures in Heaven, where neither Moth nor Ruſt doth corrupt, and where Thieves do not break through and ſteal.

For where your Treaſure is, there will your Heart be alſo.

The Light of the Body is the Eye: if therefore thine Eye be ſingle, thy whole Body ſhall be full of Light.

But if thine Eye be evil, thy whole Body ſhall be full of Darkneſs. If therefore the

the Light that is in thee be Darkneſs, how great is that Darkneſs?

No Man can ſerve two Maſters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or elſe he will hold to the one, and deſpiſe the other. Ye cannot ſerve God and Mammon.

Therefore I ſay unto you, Take no thought for your Life, what ye ſhall eat, or what ye ſhall drink; nor yet for your Body, what ye ſhall put on: is not the Life more than Meat, and the Body than Raiment?

Behold the Fowls of the Air: for they ſow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into Barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Which of you by taking thought can add one Cubit unto his Stature?

And why take ye thought for Raiment? Conſider the Lillies of the Field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they ſpin.

And yet I ſay unto you, that even Solomon *in all his Glory was not arrayed like one of theſe.*

Wherefore if God ſo clothe the Graſs of the Field, which to day is, and to morrow is caſt into the Oven; ſhall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little Faith?

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed?

For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

Take therefore no thought for the Morrow, for the Morrow shall take thought for the things of it self: sufficient unto the Day is the Evil thereof.

OUR Lord having sufficiently cautioned his Disciples against seeking this World's *Praise* in an ostentatious Performance of Religious Duties, warns them next against a Desire of the *Wealth* and *Riches* of this World. And here he enters upon a Doctrine wholly Evangelical, proper to no Religion, but to that which *he* taught, and agreeable only to that spiritual and heavenly Kingdom, which he was then erecting. But because it must appear a new and strange Precept to the *Jews*, who expected that the Kingdom of the Messiah would be founded in the Enjoyment

ment of Riches and temporal Proſperity, he proceeds to argue for the Obſervance of it, by ſhewing the Reaſonableneſs of the Duty in ſeveral Particulars. Thus therefore in effect he ſpeaks to us in the preſent Paragraph.

" Make it not the Buſineſs of your " Lives to get and hoard up earthly Trea- " ſures; ſet not your Hearts upon them, " they are vain in their own Nature: " The richeſt Furniture wears away by " Uſe and Age, and even your Gold laid " by conſumes in Ruſt, and all are but " uncertain Poſſeſſions, which ye may " eaſily be deprived of by a thouſand Ac- " cidents. But inſtead thereof, provide " your ſelves an Inheritance in the World " to come, a Treaſure which neither Vio- " lence nor Fraud can take from you, nor " Time nor Misfortunes can deſtroy. For " whatever you eſteem as your Happineſs, " on that will your Hearts and your Af- " fections be ſet. If your Judgments be " good, ye will rightly diſcern the Va- " lue of heavenly Treaſures above earth- " ly, and direct your Aims and your De- " ſires accordingly; but if your Judg- " ments be corrupt and blinded, your " Choice will certainly be wrong, and " how fatal muſt ſuch an Error " prove! Nor will the Folly be leſs, to

" think to *divide* your ſelves between
" this World and the other. For it is
" impoſſible to obey two Maſters com-
" manding contrary Services; to be de-
" voted faithfully to God, and at the
" ſame time governed by the oppoſite In-
" tereſts and Maxims of this World. Be
" not therefore ſollicitous to *make a Fi-*
" *gure*, but content your ſelves with the
" Neceſſaries of Life according to your
" Condition, and even for theſe, for your
" ordinary Food and Raiment, be not
" anxiouſly thoughtful; but having em-
" ployed your Induſtry in the uſe of ho-
" neſt and proper Means to obtain them,
" leave the Event to God, depending al-
" ways upon his Providence, which will
" not leave you deſtitute, and which you
" ſee takes care of every other Creature.
" The Birds of the Air are incapable of
" plowing and ſowing, or of the Arts of
" Trade and Merchandize; all they can
" do is to go out and *ſeek* their Food,
" and God provides it for them: and if
" he thus feeds them, will he neglect or
" overlook the nobler Branches of his
" Family? If he will not ſuffer even the
" Birds to want, which only by *natural*
" *Inſtinct* truſt in him, much more will
" he take care of you, who truſt in him
" by choice, and glorify him by a *religi-*

" *ous*

" *ous and rational Dependance.* But if
" ye will ſtill be truſting to your own
" Care, and place your only hopes there-
" in, conſider that how ſollicitous ſoever
" ye are, how many and wiſe ſoever your
" Projects are, they are all to no purpoſe,
" except the Providence of God ſucceed
" and bleſs them; without his Aſſiſtance
" ye can no more add one Farthing to
" your Eſtate, than one Cubit to your
" Stature. And as for your Raiment,
" obſerve the Flowers of the Earth, which
" have no Thought of their Clothing, no
" Care in the providing of it, and yet no
" Furniture in *Solomon*'s Court was ſo
" beautiful and glorious. Now if God
" beſtows ſuch Ornaments on the ſhort-
" liv'd Flowers of the Field, which are
" but of a Day's continuance, ye muſt
" have little Faith indeed to queſtion his
" Concern for you. 'Tis true, the igno-
" rant Gentiles, who have Gods of Wood
" and Stone, that cannot help them, and
" who have neither an Intereſt in, nor
" any juſt Notion of Happineſs in a Life
" to come, are with ſome ſhew of Rea-
" ſon carking and ſollicitous for a Provi-
" ſion in this preſent World: but ye that
" are my Diſciples ſhould know better.
" Ye know that ye have in Heaven a
" moſt compaſſionate and Almighty Fa-
" ther,

" ther, who is thoroughly ſenſible of your " Wants, and able and willing to relieve " them. Ye are born to nobler Expecta- " tions than this World can anſwer; ye " have an Inheritance in eternal Glory, " that requires your beſt Affections, and " your greateſt Diligence. Employ your " Care then in the firſt place by a Life of " Righteouſneſs, to ſecure an Intereſt in " that future State of Glory; and ſuch a " Care ſhall be ſo far from occaſioning " any want of *temporal Neceſſaries* (tho' " it divert you from an eager and anxious " Solicitude about them) that the Provi- " dence of God will upon that very ac- " count more eſpecially concern it ſelf to " provide for and ſupply you with them. " Look not therefore too far forward; " every Day has its own Trouble and " Moleſtation, and why ſhould ye anti- " cipate the Cares and Sorrows of many " Years to come, which it may be ye " may never feel, or if ye do, it will be " ſoon enough in its own Seaſon; and to " partake of them ſooner is to double " your own Burden, and to ſuffer twice " under the ſame Evil.

In the further Explanation of this Paragraph, I ſhall ſhew,

I. The

I. The full Extent of the Precept; that we should not lay up Treasures on Earth, but lay them up in Heaven.

II. The Force of all those Arguments distinctly, which our Lord makes use of here to strengthen it.

I. The full Extent of the Precept; which will best appear, by considering each Branch of it apart: As,

First, What is included in the Negative, the thing which is here forbidden us, *laying up Treasures on Earth.* And this having in it several Degrees of Evil; and *every one* of them by it self being an Offence against the Precept, as well as *all of them together*, it will be necessary to trace them step by step, if we would be exact in our Discovery.

(1.) First then, there may be *too great an Opinion* of the *Worth* and *Excellency* of earthly Treasures; a vain Notion of the *Sufficiency* of these things to make a Man happy; and this either proceeds from, or produces (for it is necessarily attended with) cold and slighty Apprehensions of true spiritual Happiness, the Pleasures of Religion, and the Expectations of a Life to come. The Worldling has *heard* indeed of the Comforts which pious Souls take

take in the Contemplation of God's Love to them, and the Exercise of their own to God; he has been *told* of a most delightful Entercourse with Heaven in Prayer, and Praises, and receiving the Holy Sacrament: but these Employments being spiritual, and he a Stranger to them, it passes all for meer Enthusiasm, or at least his Ideas of the Delight that is to be found in them are confused, and faint, and ineffectual. He has been taught, and *pretends* to believe many glorious things of a Felicity immense and everlasting, reserv'd beyond the Grave, for the Spirits of just Men made perfect; but the Futurity and Distance of them is such, that even their Greatness and Eternity do very little move his Affections. Whereas this present World and its Enjoyments are at hand, the Reality of them is visible, and the Impressions they make upon him strong, as they are the Objects of Sense: the Nature of them is suited to a corrupt and carnal Heart, at *Enmity with God*, and earnestly seeking Happiness in *it self*, or any thing rather than in *him*. He finds them in esteem with almost every body, the daily Conversation turns upon them, and the common Endeavours of Mankind are center'd in them: which puts a mighty Bias on his

his Judgment, to approve and admire what presents it self under so many Recommendations. As this is true of the *Enjoyments of this World* in general, so is it also with regard particularly to *Riches*, the grand Instrument of procuring all the rest. The Pomp and Hospitality of the Great, with the Respect and Honours that are paid them, cannot but draw a secret Veneration to that Wealth of which they are the Consequents. The ordinary Conveniences and Comforts of Life, nay even Necessaries of it too, being not to be had without Money, is a most sensible Argument with Men to value it. And beside all this, the very Precepts of their Education prepare them in favour of it: for the Father leaves a plentiful Portion to his Son, and telling a grave Story of the Labours and Hazards he underwent in raising it, gives him strict Charge, and many Directions for the Improvement. The Master, together with the Mysteries of his Trade, instructs his Servant in the more secret ones of unreasonable Gain and Profit. And thus Posterity falls of course into the vain Sentiments of those that went before, and Money is become the Idol of the World. Now that this overbearing *Opinion* and *Admiration of Riches* (tho' it were possible it should proceed

no

no farther) is *sinful*, appears, in that it carries with it (as I observed above) a Disregard and Disesteem of spiritual things; 'tis a formal Decision (tho' a very base and false one) that Earthly Treasures are more valuable than Heavenly; that the Interests of this World are preferable to those of another, that Money is better than Religion, and Mammon a more useful and a more powerful Friend than God. It ascribes a Sufficiency in the Creature, which can be only found in the Creator, and draws us into other wicked and dangerous Notions: for those who think so highly of Riches, will look upon Poverty with Contempt, on the Duty of Self-denial as a Jest, and on a State of Affliction as a certain Mark of God's Disfavour; tho' the Holy Scriptures, in every Part of them, teach us quite the contrary Doctrine. A Christian therefore (if he will obey this Precept of our Saviour) ought to esteem Riches, and all other worldly Enjoyments, only according to their *true* Use and Value, without regard to popular Maxims, or to the Passions and Appetites of corrupted Nature. For I deny not that the things of this World, and Money as well as any thing else, have something of a Value in them; the Danger is in *over-*

rating

rating them. They have a *Goodness*, but not an *Excellence*; they are in some measure *necessary to the Comfort and Convenience of Human Life*, but by no means *sufficient to a real and rational Happiness*. Hitherto we have considered the Opinion only, and the Esteem of Earthly Treasures; but it seldom stops here, the next Step is naturally,

(2.) A *Coveting* and *Desire* of what appears so excellent to a carnal Mind. Not that Men do always proceed herein in an argumentative way, examine first the Advantages of Riches, conclude them valuable, and then desire them: but being habitually inured to an high Opinion of these things, they desire them at the same time by a sort of moral Instinct, as they do their Food by a natural Appetite. Yet it is nevertheless distinctly to be considered here, as one Step farther towards the *laying up Treasures upon Earth*; and if the Esteem of those Treasures be sinful, the *Desire* of them is still a greater Sin, because it is an Error of the *Affections* added to an Error of the *Judgment*. And that *it is* indeed an Error of the *Affections*, will appear by this Consideration, that whenever it prevails as a ruling Principle in the Heart, 'tis *inconsistent* with the *Love of God*. For so we are taught by St.

1 John 2. 15. St. *John*, *Love not the World, neither the things that are in the World: If any Man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him.* If therefore the *Love of God* be a Duty (as ſure it is, if either Religion, Reaſon, or Gratitude can make it ſo) the *Love of Riches*, which ſo effectually undermines and overthrows it, that 'tis impoſſible one Heart ſhould hold them both together, muſt needs be a very grievous Sin. And becauſe it does more than any thing debauch the Mind from God, and ſets up this World as an Idol in competition with him, 'tis call'd *Idolatry* in the inſpired Language of St. *Paul*. Add to this, that the ſame Apoſtle, St. *Paul*, has declared it to be the *Root of all Evil*; and what he means by that, his own Words immediately foregoing will explain to us:

1 Tim. 6. 9, 10. *For they that will be rich fall into Temptations and a Snare, and into many fooliſh and hurtful Luſts, which drown Men in Deſtruction and Perdition.* Where this exorbitant Love of Money is indulged, it breaks down all the Bounds and Fences of Conſcience, and hurries Men with looſe Reins into any Sin whatever, that may forward their obtaining of it. What vile Hypocriſy, Diſſimulation, and Flattery; what Lewdneſs, what Lying and Cheating, what Oppreſſion and Treachery; what

what Perjuries, Murders, Treaſons, and other enormous Villanies, are chargeable daily upon this prevailing Paſſion? So very juſtly has *Solomon* obſerved, *He that makes haſte to be rich, ſhall not be innocent.* And ſurely that which thus abounds with the Seeds of every other Sin, muſt it ſelf be a very great one. Yet perhaps we are not ſeverely to underſtand this of *every* Deſire of Riches; tho' to diſtinguiſh with Exactneſs how far we may go in this Matter, is ſomewhat difficult, and harder ſtill to regulate our ſelves in Practice by ſuch a Diſtinction. St. *John*, when he forbids us to *love the World, and the things that are in the World*, could never deſign to diſcharge us *abſolutely* from *all manner* of Affection to any thing here; for then even *natural Affection to our Relations*, and the Delight we take in them, would be unlawful. Nor can *all Degrees* of the *Deſire of Riches* be included in that, or in any other Prohibition: for Riches are the Gift of God, and reckoned up amongſt the Bleſſings of his Providence to *Solomon*; and ſurely what God thinks fit to *beſtow* as a Bleſſing, we may deſire as ſuch. The Deſire of Riches, therefore, is not *ſimply* and *abſolutely* criminal; but as attended with certain vicious Adherences, from which 'tis very hard to pu-

Prov. 28. 20.

rify it. Remove what is *evil* in it, and it becomes lawful. Now one Evil of it, as we have ſeen by the Antitheſis in that Text of St. *John* laſt cited, lies in this, that it draws us *from the Love of God*, by ſuffering the World and its Enjoyments to uſurp a Sovereignty in our Hearts, which is and can be due only to *Him*, as our Supreme Good. Another Evil (pointed out by St. *Paul*) is the *Impetuoſity* of that Deſire, leading us into abundance of Sins to accompliſh it, as Fraud, Violence, Oppreſſion, Treachery, Neglect of Religion, *&c.* To make the Deſire of Riches lawful then, it muſt be ſo purified, as to be thoroughly conſiſtent with thoſe two fundamental Duties, the *Loving of God above all things*, and *our Neighbour as our ſelves*. Let us but make ſure in the firſt place, that GOD remain ſtill the Sovereign Object of our Affections; that our Deſire of Riches be not any the leaſt Diminution of our Love of Him, nor any way divert us from an Hunger and Thirſt after Righteouſneſs; that whatever we obtain of earthly Treaſures, we be ready and willing to part with them all, if there be Occaſion, for the ſake of Religion; and that our principal aim in deſiring them, be not the Gratification of our own covetous Fancy, but ſincerely and really the

the glorifying God by good Works of Piety and Charity. Let us alſo be ſtrictly careful, that it lead us not one Step awry to the Prejudice of our Neighbour, that we entertain not one Thought of getting them by ſinful Methods, or uſing them to diſhoneſt and unworthy Purpoſes. And laſtly, that we deſire them not, but in a cool and moderate way, ſcarce one Degree above Indifference, and with a conſtant and entire Submiſſion to the Will of God, whether we obtain them or not: And *then* perhaps there may be no Harm in the Deſire of Riches. I ſay, if all this be *practicable*, and the Deſire be thus *in Fact reſtrained and regulated*, I ſhall make no ſcruple of granting, that the Prohibition in this Paragraph of our Saviour's Sermon, and others to the ſame purpoſe, do not reach it. But if on the contrary, it appear (as I believe it will) *impracticable*, through the common Corruption of our Nature, the Strength of our Paſſions, and the Difficulty of attending at once to ſo many nice and burdenſome (however neceſſary) Limitations; we muſt look upon the Deſire of Riches as a *forbidden Appetite*, and correct all Motions toward it as ſinful; confining our ſelves to that diſcreet Petition of *Agur*, *Give me neither Poverty nor Riches, but*

feed me with Food convenient for me. For I would have it obſerved here, once for all, that I am not ſpeaking againſt the Deſire of ſo much of this World as is neceſſary for the due Support of our ſelves, and thoſe that depend upon us, or ſuch a Proviſion for them as is ſuitable to the Rank and Station wherein God has placed us: But I ſpeak of *Riches* or *Superfluity* and *Abundance*, the Notion of which is to be meaſured by Mens other Circumſtances. And in judging of this, every Man for himſelf, there muſt be a ſtrict and careful Impartiality; that we do not firſt by our Pride preſume upon an higher Rank than really belongs to us, and create *imaginary Neceſſities* thereupon, and then pretend to juſtify our *Covetouſneſs*, in Order to ſupport our *Vanity*: But let us form a true and modeſt Judgment of our Station, and deſire no more than that Station really calls for. I muſt now go on to,

(3.) The third Degree or Inſtance of laying up Treaſures upon Earth: And that is the *actual Labour* and *Purſuit in obtaining them*, ſolicitouſly projecting in the ſeveral Arts and Methods for that Purpoſe, contriving all poſſible Ways, and putting the Scheme in Execution, with a perfect Drudgery of Diligence, and laying hold

of

of all Opportunities to grow rich. This follows upon the Desire of Riches: For what a Man desires he endeavours to compass, and the Desire still encreases with the Endeavour, and the Endeavour is again more vigorous in Proportion to the Desire, so that the Thing is infinite, and there is no End of coveting and procuring Riches. I am sensible, that the Matter treated of here, will need greater Caution than the former: For tho' the *Desire of Riches* may with some Limitations be *lawful*, it is in no Case enjoyned as a *Duty*, and therefore may be let alone without offending, whereas Industry (the Subject of our present Question) tho' it may in some Cases and Degrees be unlawful, yet in some also, and indeed, in general, it is a Duty, a positive Part of our Religion, and the contrary to it *Sloth* and *Idleness*, a notorious Sin. The *Proverbs of Solomon* are very copious on this Head, and the *New Testament* Inspiration is not behind-hand in this Matter. St. *Paul* has delivered a general Canon, that *if any Man will not work, neither should he eat*, and presses his own Example, *who wrought with Labour and Travel Night and Day*, to maintain himself. And amongst his Exhortations to the *Romans*, this is one, that they should *not* be *slothful in Business*.

1 Thes. 3. 8, 10.

Rom. 12. 11.

Our Saviour, tho' he whip'd the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, yet he did not out of their Shops; but *honoured* laborious and honeſt Profeſſions, by chooſing Diſciples of ſuch Employments. The Labour therefore which we are here ſpeaking againſt, as ſinful, is to be diſtinguiſhed from honeſt Induſtry.

(1.) In the *Object* of it, *Riches* and *Abundance*. If we look back to the primitive Inſtitution of Labour, we find it enjoined us in Part of *Puniſhment* for *Adam*'s Diſobedience. From whence 'tis very plain, the Deſign of it could never be to ſupply us with *Power* and *Riches*. But *what* was the proper and appointed Object of our Labour by that Sentence, the Words of it ſufficiently intimate, *In the Sweat of thy Face ſhalt thou eat thy Bread.* We were not bid to labour, that we might engroſs as much of the World as we could get; but to procure thereby the *Neceſſaries of Life* for our ſelves, and thoſe that depend upon us; including ſuch a Proviſion for the future, as may put our Children into a Way of living, by Trades or Profeſſions, ſuitable to the Rank we bear. If any more be aim'd at, it muſt be only the glorifying God, and doing Good to others by Works of Charity, according to that Rule of St. *Paul*,

Gen. 3. 19.

Let

Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his Hands the Things which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Or as it is expressed upon another Occasion, that *our Abundance may be a Supply to the Want of others.* But this is a Design too general for a narrow-spirited and selfish World to think of; and yet I dare be bold to affirm, that for such good Offices ought all the Endeavours of Encrease, and the Command of Riches, chiefly to be intended. Works of Charity, and the Promoting and Propagating true Religion, are the only warrantable Views of Labour that I know of. But where the Design is merely the *raising of an Estate*, or the *scraping together so much Money*, let the Methods by which they pursue it, be never so honest, their Improvement never so just, the End denominates the Action, and it becomes unlawful. I fear this will be thought a very hard Saying, by those (even better Men than ordinary) that are in a Way of growing rich, and have hitherto pleased themselves with the Fairness and Integrity of the Means they use to become so, and never questioned that in the Use of such fair Means, they might lawfully get as much as ever they could; to these it will be an hard Saying, but who

Eph. 4. 28.

2 Cor. 8. 14.

can help it? The Precept is very plain, *Lay not up for your selves Treasures upon Earth*; so plain, that one would think it equally impossible to be unobserved or evaded, by what political Glosses soever the Covetousness of Men may think to interpret away a Command, that lies so directly against them. But farther, Labour may become sinful not only by its *Object*, but,

(2.) By *Excess in the Measures* of it, by a too great Eagerness and Intenseness in labouring even for a lawful End, the Necessaries of Life, and much more for an unlawful Object, Riches and Abundance. I call it excessive, when it either breaks the Health, or so takes up our Time from the Service of God, as to draw us into a Neglect of the necessary Duties of Religion, in public, in private, or with our Families. Whenever it thus loosens our Affections, or withdraws us from the daily Practice of Prayer, Meditation, and reading of the Word of God, 'tis no longer laudable Industry, but sinful Labour. *Martha* was undoubtedly well employ'd as to the End of her Diligence, when she was preparing an Entertainment for our Saviour, yet see how he rebukes her in Favour of her Sister *Mary*, who was more intent in hearing his

his Divine Inſtructions, and minding the ſpiritual Concerns of her own Soul. *Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many Things; but one Thing is needful, and* Mary *hath choſen that good Part which ſhall not be taken away from her.* Luke 10. 41, 42. I proceed now (as thoſe buſy Worldlings uſually do, of whom I am ſpeaking) to,

(4.) The fourth and laſt Particular prohibited, the *hoarding up of Treaſures when acquired.* Not caring to expend, but keeping together all they have gotten; either from a Vanity of *meer Poſſeſſion*, to pleaſe their Eye, and entertain their Fancy; or by Way of Reſerve againſt the Poſſibilities of *future Want*; or upon the Project of *leaving much Wealth to their Children*, to advance and render them more conſiderable in the World. Now the firſt of the Caſes will be allowed, by all that are not concerned in it themſelves, to be ſinful. Men generally ſpeak ill of thoſe covetous Wretches that lay up Money out of a baſe Affection to the Coin, that with ſuch Delight count their Caſh and review their Securities, it goes againſt the Heart of them to part with any Thing, but in a Way of Uſury and Increaſe, and are ſo far from doing any Good with it to their Neigh-

Neighbourhood, by Hospitality or Charity, that they almost starve their own Families, in the midst of this Abundance. There is no Need, I say, of convincing the *Generality* of Men, that this is sinful and prohibited; but those that are guilty of the Practice, want to be convinc'd, and they may be so, if they will but compare it with those positive Texts of Scripture, wherein God, who is still the direct Proprietor of all their Wealth, prescribes to them what they shall do with it. The Paragraph we are upon expresly forbids them to *lay it up*, or keep it as an useless Treasure by them. St. *Paul* orders *Timo-*

1 Tim. 6. 17, 18. *thy* to *charge them that are rich in this World, that they do good, that they be rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.* And St. *Peter* charges

1 Pet. 4. 9. them to *use Hospitality one to another without grudging.* And it is elsewhere decla-

1 Tim. 5. 8. red, that *if any Man provide not for his own, especially for those of his own House, he has denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel.* But here perhaps the third Class of Men (who pretend to be laying up for their Children) taking Advantage of this last cited Text, will think themselves not only fairly acquitted, but even value themselves upon laying up Treasures, as discharging a *Duty* instead of com-

committing a *Sin*. 'Tis fit we should consider this Matter a little more carefully, for no Mistake is so fatal as betwixt Sin and Duty. Let them then, in the first Place, examine well their own Consciences, whether their Design and End in laying up, is really the *Benefit of their Children*, or whether it be not rather the indulging a Vanity of their own, their Love of Money? 'Tis possible they may deceive themselves. If while they pretend to be doing this for their Children, they hoard up Treasure to leave them *only when they die*; and will either not bestow any due Proportion of it in the mean Time, in giving them a liberal and advantagious Education; or not enable them by handsome Settlements upon Marriage, or Encouragements that may forward 'em in a Way of Business, to live comfortably and creditably in the World at present; I will venture to determine, that (let them pretend what they will) their *Children's Benefit* is not the Principle by which they are acted, but their own *covetous Fancy*. In the next Place, supposing they are in Earnest, and that the Wealth they are laying up, is all design'd to make their Children rich and great, to raise a Family, and advance them much above the Rank they were born to, this can ne-

never be justified by that Text they cite for it; 'tis not such a *providing for one's own*, as the Apostle speaks of. He is considering the Case of Widows maintain'd by the public Charity, and directs as a Thing highly equitable, that such of them as have Relations able to take Care of them, should not be *cast* upon the Church for a Maintenance, but supported at the private Charge of those Relations. And this is plainly in the prime Intention and Scope of the Context, what the Apostle means by *providing for our own*, the relieving of our poor Relations, that they may not be chargeable to the public. But if we will needs interpret it, of laying up Fortunes for our Children (which has not the least Connection with his Argument) it cannot reasonably be extended farther, than that beside what is necessary to their *present Maintenance* and *Education*, we should endeavour to leave them *so much, as joyn'd with their own Industry, in a Way of Business suitable to our Rank, may probably secure them from Want.* Thus far, I doubt not, the laying up something for Posterity is a Provision fit to be made (and if it be in our Power to accomplish it) a *Duty* too. If it be objected, that this is still *laying up*. I answer, that our Saviour speaks only against laying up

Rich-

Riches or *Treasures*, viz. more than the Condition and Degree God has placed us in requires: But what is really *necessary to the Support of that Condition*, does not fall under that Prohibition; so that this may be laboured for and laid up without Scruple, a due Proportion of it being disposed in Charity. Nor do I deny, that where the Providence of God does *extraordinarily* bless a moderate Industry, or pours in a great Accession of Wealth *without our seeking*, we may innocently leave this to our Children (provided still that our Charities encrease together with our Abilities) and by this, they may honestly be raised to a Station, higher than that to which they were born; but this is not properly *OUR laying up*, and therefore does not fall within a Prohibition, which only concerns our Worldly-mindedness and Love of Riches.

Let us now consider the *other* Case mentioned under this Head, the laying up by way of *Reserve against the possibilities of future Want.* And here also I deny not, that a prudent Provision for the *future*, as well as present Supply of our selves in Things that are *necessary* to Life, or the Comforts of it, is lawful. So *Solomon* advises, *Go to the Ant, thou Sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise:* Prov. 6. 6, 8.

Which

Which provideth her Meat in the Summer, and gathereth her Food in the Harveſt. But then we are to do it without any *uneaſie Solicitude*, without *truſting in Riches*, or *diſtruſting the Divine Providence*, with a *Freedom in uſing at preſent what we poſſeſs*, ſo far as is neceſſary and ſuitable to our Condition; and with a *liberal Diſtribution* to the Poor, that we defraud not *them* of what God has laid up for them in our Hands. But here perhaps it may be enquired, whether *all* laying up for the future, be not a Diſtruſt of the Providence of God? I anſwer, No: Becauſe his *Promiſes*, as they are declared to us in his Holy Word, are the Rule and Meaſure of our Truſt. Now God has no where promiſed to ſuſtain, and provide for thoſe that undo themſelves by Sloth, or Thoughtleſneſs, or Extravagance; and therefore to depend upon him in ſuch a way, is Preſumption, inſtead of Truſt in God. And on the contrary, to provide for our future Living, by the Meaſures of reaſonable Frugality, and common Prudence, and with a ſerene and eaſy Mind, is ſo far from a diſtruſt of God's Providence, that it is really truſting in him in the way that he requires; that is, in the moderate uſe of Means, and not in dependance

dance upon unpromised Miracles. 'Tis unhappy, that we know not how to keep out of Extremes, that we know not how to be *Frugal* without being *Penurious*, nor *careful* without *Anxiety*, nor *easy* without being *Careless*, nor *liberal* without *Extravagance*; and yet these are Distinctions that must be practically made, or else we confound the Differences of Vice and Vertue, Sin and Duty. And thus I have endeavoured largely to explain, what our Saviour means here by laying up Treasures upon Earth, and to distinguish as justly as I could, in what Particulars and Degrees the Sinfulness of it does consist. I have been the larger upon it, because this Prohibition seems generally to be misunderstood, or not considered in Practice, even by those who are esteemed very good Men, who (as if there was no such Precept in the Christian Religion) take it for granted, that they may procure as much of the Treasures of this World, as honestly they can, and do accordingly lay up in Store for themselves and their Posterity, and commend those who do the same, under the Character of notable and thrifty; *who join House to House, and lay Field to Field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the Earth.*

But

But ſuch as are really good Men, and deſire to govern their Conſciences, and their Practice by the Direction of God's Word, will I hope be convinced by what has been ſaid, that this Precept lays a reſtraint upon Men's *overvaluing*, *deſire*, *purſuit of*, and *laying up* of Riches.

I proceed now,

Secondly, To ſhew what is meant by *laying up Treaſure in Heaven*, which is the *poſitive* Part of the Precept in this Paragraph of our Saviour's Sermon. The Meaning thereof in general is, that we ſhould make it our chief Endeavour to ſecure to our ſelves an Intereſt in the Love of God, and the Inheritance of a bleſſed Eternity; and ſo it is in Truth, an Exhortation to all and every Duty, that lies in a Chriſtians way to Heaven, but it ſeems more eſpecially to include, and to be underſtood of theſe Three.

(1.) *Faith*, or a firm Belief of the infinite (tho' as yet inviſible) Glories reſerved in Heaven for thoſe who love and obey God. And this is both the *Duty*, and the *Comfort* of a Chriſtian; 'tis this important Secret that bears up his Spirits, carries him through all the Storms of Life, with a ſerene and chearful Temper. *He is troubled on every ſide, yet not diſtreſſed; he is perplexed, but not in deſpair.* Loſſes

ses and Misfortunes follow one upon the Neck of another; Poverty presses hard upon him, Disappointments blast and baffle him, Contempt is daily treading on his Heels, Insults and Injuries meeting him at every Corner, long Sickness consumes his Body, or sharp and violent Pains torment it, Slanders and Malice wound his Reputation, and a great variety of Evils exercise his Patience. What is it therefore that supports him under all these Tryals, but the Hopes that Heaven will make amends at last: *For this Cause*, says St. *Paul*, *we faint not, but tho' our outward Man perish, yet the inward Man is renewed Day by Day. For our light Affliction which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory; While we look not at the Things which are seen, but at the Things which are not seen, for the Things which are seen are Temporal, but the Things which are not seen are Eternal.* 2 Cor. 4. 16, 17, 18.

I need not prove such a Faith to be our Duty, the Apostle having declared in a few Words, that *whosoever cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* Heb. 11. 6. And that this Duty is included in this Precept, of *laying up Treasures in Heaven*, is plain by visible Connection. I proceed

therefore to the ſecond Duty implied in it.

(2.) *Heavenly Mindedneſs*; or a Sovereign and prevailing Eſteem of ſpiritual Things, the Bleſſedneſs of Heaven, and the Religion that prepares us for it, above all worldly Buſineſs or Enjoyments whatſoever. Under this Head we ſuppoſe the Chriſtian in a *ſmooth* and *proſperous* State; the Riches of the World, and perhaps the Honour of it too, the Reſpect and Friendſhip of all about him, the innocent Pleaſures and Comforts of this Life; and in a word, the Bounty of an indulgent Providence, attending and bleſſing him on every ſide. And he that in theſe Circumſtances can keep his Eye fixed upon a better World to come, that purſues the Intereſt of his *Soul*, with a more deep and real Concern than any *ſecular* Intereſt; that does in Choice and Affection ſeriouſly prefer the Delight of glorified Spirits (praiſing and adoring God to all Eternity) before the moſt agreeable of the earthly Pleaſures and Diverſions, that offer themſelves to his Enjoyment here, and does accordingly entertain himſelf with a truer Reliſh in the Contemplation of thoſe bleſſed Hopes, in practiſing to improve himſelf in a devout and holy Love of God, and tuning his Heart before-

hand

hand to celeſtial Praiſes, and exerciſing himſelf to Godlineſs in the ſeveral Duties of Religion, than in either the Grandure, or the Wealth of this World, or in any Thing elſe that pleaſes or imploys him in it; he that does thus, may properly be ſaid to *lay up Treaſures in Heaven*, for his Heart is there already, and in ſo doing performs the Duty enjoyn'd here by our Saviour, which St. *Paul* has well explained to this Purpoſe, in his Epiſtle to the *Coloſſians*, *Set your Affections on Things above; and not on Things on the Earth.* Col. 3. 2.

(3.) The third and laſt Duty which I ſhall inſiſt on, as particularly included in that of laying up Treaſures in Heaven, is *Charity to the Poor.* The covetous Worldling thinks himſelf very wiſe in ſaving all that he can ſcrape together, in putting it out to Uſe, or hoarding it up in Bags, or purchaſing Eſtates with it, and thinks all is *thrown away* that is given to relieve the want of the Poor, to feed the Hungry, to cloath the Naked, or releaſe the Priſoner. But Time perhaps will ſhew, at leaſt Eternity will, that this is a very great Miſtake, and that he who is at the moſt Expence in Charity, lays up the largeſt and the moſt laſting Treaſure. That very Money which

he ſeems to ſcatter about with ſuch a careleſs Hand, is really put out at the higheſt Intereſt, and upon the beſt Security; *For he that hath Pity upon the Poor lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him again.* God is pleaſed to ſtand anſwerable for what is ſo diſpoſed of, and tho' we can merit nothing from him by our Charity, or any other good Action (becauſe we are under previous Obligations to it as a Duty) yet he has graciouſly encouraged us thereto, by aſſuring us that he will abundantly repay us, either *here*, by the bleſſing of his Providence to encreaſe the Remainder; or in a *better World*, by the Rewards of *Everlaſting Happineſs*. *Thou when thou makeſt a Feaſt*, ſays our Saviour, *call the Poor, the Maimed, the Lame, the Blind: And thou ſhalt be bleſſed; for they cannot recompenſe thee: For thou ſhalt be recompenſed at the Reſurrection of the Juſt* St. *Paul* alſo charging thoſe that are rich in this World, that they do good, that they be rich in good Works, ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate, puts them in Mind, that ſo to do is but laying up for themſelves a good Foundation againſt the Time to come, that they may lay hold on Eternal Life. So that what we diſperſe in Works of Charity, is ſo far from being

Prov. 11. 25. Luke 6. 38.

Luke 14. 13, 14.

1 Tim. 6. 18, 19.

being loſt to us, or thrown away, that it is laid up for us, as a Fund or Treaſure in Heaven, where we ſhall find it again, tho' not in Specie, yet in ſuch returns of Happineſs and Glory, as ſhall abundantly ſatisfie, and for ever bleſs us. And that what I have ſaid upon this Subject is not only true, but is directly and intentionally within the meaning of our Saviour's Precept, is plain enough by his way of expreſſing it in St. *Luke*, where the Subſtance of this ſame Diſcourſe is recorded, *Sell that ye have, and* Luke 12. *give Alms: Provide your ſelves Bags* 33. *which wax not old, a Treaſure in the Heavens, which faileth not, where no Thief approacheth, neither Moth corrupteth.* And thus I have gone through my firſt general Head, and ſhewn the full Extent of this Precept in both Parts of it, that we ſhould *not lay up Treaſures on Earth*, and that we ſhould *lay them up in Heaven.*

I come now to my

II. Second general Head, to ſhew the force of every diſtinct Argument our Saviour here makes uſe of againſt *laying up Treaſures upon Earth.* And theſe may be reduced to Two Heads, ſuch as reſpect the greedy Affections of Riches, and ſuch

as relate to an uneasy and disquieting Provision for the future.

1. Such as relate chiefly to the *Affection for*, or *Love of Riches:* And these are,

(1.) The *Uncertainty of Riches.* Lay not up for your selves Treasures upon Earth, *where Moth and Rust doth corrupt, and where Thieves break through and steal.* To the same Purpose *Solomon* both exhorts and argues, *Labour not to be rich, cease from thine own Wisdom: Wilt thou set thine Eyes upon that which is not? For Riches certainly make themselves wings, they fly away, as an Eagle towards Heaven.* And certainly, were we but disposed to be wise at the cost of other Peoples Experience, rather than our own, we should save our selves much Grief and Vexation, by setting only such a value upon the Possessions of this World, as we would upon Things we expect to lose, or to have taken from us. Do we not see, by how many Accidents those who had Riches, are on a sudden reduced to Poverty? By Fire, by Shipwrack, by Robbery, by the Villany or Misfortunes of a Bankrupt, what a mighty Alteration in our Circumstances may be made in Four and Twenty Hours? Christianity therefore, which is the truest *Pru-*

Prov. 23. 4.

dence,

dence, as well as the beſt Religion, teaches us to ſit looſe to all the periſhing Enjoyments of this World. A Temper which St. *Paul* has eloquently deſcribed in his firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*. *It remains*, ſays he, *that they who rejoice, be as tho' they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as tho' they poſſeſſed not; and they that uſe this World, as not abuſing it: for the Faſhion of this World paſſeth away.* And our Saviour warns us, that Treaſures upon Earth are ſlipery and uncertain, vain, and eaſily loſt; and becauſe they are ſo, not worth a wiſe Man's laying up. But there are other Treaſures that cannot fail us, and are not ſubject to any ſuch Contingences: Treaſures laid *up in Heaven*, are out of the reach of Violence or Chance; ſecuring an Intereſt there, we have *choſen that better Part, which ſhall not be taken from us.* The Glories of another World are an Inheritance perfectly ſecure, *a Kingdom which cannot be ſhaken*; there and there only let our Hearts and Hopes repoſe themſelves. 1 Cor. 7. 29,30,31.

(2.) The ſecond Argument is drawn from the *ill Effect*, which the laying up Earthly Treaſures is like to have *upon the Religion of our Minds*; in alienating our Affections and Attention from the Service of God, and debauching the whole Heart,

our Time, our Care, and Industry, to the Service of Riches. *Where a Man's Treasure is, there will his Heart be also. No Man can serve two Masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other: Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.* The Heart is the Seat of Affection, from thence flow Desire and Hope, and Fear and Joy, and all of that nature, and these all have their Propensity to Happiness; and therefore he who places his Happiness in the Abundance of the things of this World, the Motions of his Heart tend chiefly to those things; as on the contrary, he who places his Happiness in the Rewards of another World, the Operations of his Soul are influenced by the Expectations of such future Blessings, and the Heart desires spiritual things, and rejoices in the Hope of that glorious State which is to be revealed hereafter. Now the Belief and Hope of future things, in that State of Glory which Christ has revealed and promised, must of necessity much abate the inordinate Love and covetous Desire of treasuring up temporal things. And on the contrary, the laying up Treasures upon Earth will take off the Heart and Affection from Religion, and the Expectation of

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an Inheritance in the World to come. This was viſible at the firſt preaching of the Goſpel, when very few rich Men came into it. What a ſad Shipwrack did the young Diſciple make, who becauſe he had great Poſſeſſions, and could not bear the Thoughts of parting with them, rejected the Salvation offered him, and laid aſide his Pretenſions to the Heavenly Kingdom. The Parable concerning the Excuſes of thoſe invited to the Feaſt, that one had married a Wife, another taken a Farm, and a third was to prove his new bought Oxen, was intended to expoſe the evil Conſequences of worldly things, and the Prejudices they raiſe againſt the Invitations of the Goſpel. And of the ſame nature alſo is the Parable of the Seed, which being ſcattered into the Stony Ground, which is a Mind overgrown with Cares, and the Deſire of Riches, is rendered altogether unfruitful, and of no encreaſe. Nor does it only wean the Affections of a Man from the inward Power and Principle of Religion, but from the public Worſhip of God. It may be an odious Conceſſion, and yet a true one, that *too many* of thoſe that do frequent the Church, come thither not from any pious and devout Propenſity to the Duties of the Place, or any fixed and

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ſerious Regard to the Intereſt of their Souls, but for faſhion ſake, or other ſecret Ends of Hypocriſy: and yet theſe People, (how great ſoever their Sin may be in the Sight of God, which they muſt certainly anſwer for to him) do however pay an outward Complement of Reſpect, by frequently appearing there. But the Atheiſm of a worldly minded Man, whoſe Time and Thoughts are ſo enſlaved to the Purſuit of Riches, that he can very ſeldom find in his heart to ſpare one Hour or two in a Day to wait upon the Service of God in public, is the worſe Offence of the two, becauſe he paſſes an open Slight upon Religion, and his Neglect is ſcandalous. We ſhew our Love to God in our public Acknowledgments of him, in praying to him and praiſing him in Chriſtian Aſſemblies; and I ſhall not ſcruple to affirm, that all Chriſtians are bound, where they have Opportunity, and no unavoidable Impediment, to worſhip God in the Offices of the Church, in the Uſe of which, the greater the Company, the more available the Devotion. But I muſt charge it upon the Love of Riches, and the ſolicitous Endeavours of Men for the Treaſures of this World (amongſt other Cauſes) that there is ſo viſible and ſo ſcandalous a Neglect of the Service of God

God in public; so that while the World has many Servants, God has but a few: and thus it will be while earthly Treasures engross our Love, our Care, and Diligence.

2. I proceed now to those Arguments, which our Saviour uses against an *uneasy and disquieting Provision for the future.* And by these he does not argue against a moderate and prudent Care to provide what is necessary for our selves, and such as depend upon us, but only labours to take us off from an undue *Perplexity, Sollicitude, and Distrust of God's Providence, in our Care about such things.* He argues therefore,

(1.) From the merciful Care which God takes of *all* his Creatures, even those of the lowest Rank, the most inconsiderable little Bird is provided for every day at the Expence of its Almighty Creator, and by the Superintendency of his Providence. Even the Grass and the Lillies of the Field, incapable of any Sollicitude for themselves, and unregarded by Human Care, spring up in their Season, and look fresh and beautiful, and are more finely clothed by the Great God of Nature, than *Solomon* was in all his Glory: and does God concern himself for Creatures that are so much below us, which can only glorify him

him accidentally, not intentionally, by our Reflection upon them, not their own, and whose very Beings are design'd to perish within a little time? and dare we not trust him with the Care of us and ours, whom he has made in a more excellent Species, qualified with more direct Capacities to serve and praise him, formed for Eternity, Objects of his Grace in this World, and designed to be Heirs of Glory? Will he suffer us to starve, who will not let the meaner Parts of his Creation want what is necessary to their Support, or suitable to their Rank in the Creation.

(2.) A second Argument is, *We are not sure that all our Care will do the Business*; it is not certain of Success. A Man can no more add to his *Estate*, than to his *Stature*, tho' he be never so circumspect and industrious, except it pleases God to bless his Industry, and forward his Increase. Why then should Men vex and torment themselves with the Projects and Designs of obtaining that which it may be God will never suffer them to possess and enjoy? And why should they not rather, with the moderate Use of Means, apply themselves to God by Prayer, and lay the stress of all their Hopes and Expectations upon his Bounty and Bless-

Bleſſing, not upon their own Solicitude.

(3.) His third Argument is, that *after all theſe things the Gentiles ſeek*, the Gentiles, who knew not God nor his Providence; but had been trained up in Notions of a blind Chance and Fortune, which favour'd ſome and frown'd upon others, without any regard to Equity, and which yet their Poets taught them might be over-ruled by Prudence.

Nullum numen habes, ſi ſit prudentia; ſed te
Nos facimus, fortuna, deam, cæloq; locamus.

So that a wiſe projecting Man might ſtill (according to their Sentiments) have the Command of his Fortune. Such as theſe were carking and ſollicitous to provide for themſelves, ſince Plodding and good Management were ſuppoſed to have ſuch a commanding Stroke in the Event of things, and ſince their Religion was ſo far from teaching them Dependance on the wiſe and merciful Care of the Deity for their Relief, that Fortune (their ſuppoſititious Providence) was repreſented either as a thoughtleſs Chance, or an unjuſt and partial Being, and an Enemy to far the greater Part of Mankind. But *Jews*, to whom our Saviour ſpoke and *Chriſtians*, for whoſe Direction and Support

port these Precepts and Arguments were intended, being enlightened by Revelation, should know better things. They, as they are convinced by their Religion, Reason, and Observation of the Superintendancy and Wisdom, the Power and Goodness of God in the Government of human Affairs, and of every Circumstance of our Lives, are inexcusable, if they do not trust in him, and depend upon him, or if they fret themselves into the same Perplexity that Heathens do on such an Occasion.

(4.) It may very well take the place of another Argument, that our Saviour here gives a formal and positive *Promise*, that if we seek first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness, all the Necessaries of this Life shall assuredly be provided for us. The Generality of the World are mistaken in nothing more (and no Mistake can be more fatal) than in what they call *securing the main Chance*. They take it to be the getting Riches, or at least a competent Livelihood. Religion and the Interests of Eternity are considered (if at all) but as a second Rate Importance. But here our Blessed Saviour puts things in their proper Order, and shews that the Holiness of a Christian, and the Happiness of Heaven, are indeed the

the *main Chance* to be ſecured, and even the Neceſſaries of this Life are of far inferior Conſideration: If we do ſincerely make the *other* our chief Care and Requeſt, and the glorifying God our principal Buſineſs and Endeavour, theſe ſhall be thrown in too *ex abundanti*, by the Mercy of a gracious God. And can we deſire a better Security againſt Want than this? The Son of God engages here his Word and Honour, that the Pious Chriſtian, who makes Religion his firſt and greateſt Care, ſhall not need to be ſollicitous about temporal Neceſſaries, they ſhall certainly be ſupplied to him; he ſhall never want. Upon ſuch Aſſurance we may ſafely reſt, for Heaven and Earth ſhall ſooner paſs away, than one Jot or Tittle of his Promiſe fail. Laying aſide therefore all Anxiety about theſe Matters, let us in all our Straits ſtill ſay with *David, Why art thou caſt down, O my Soul,* Pſal. 43. 11. *and why art thou ſo diſquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I ſhall yet praiſe him, who is the Health of my Countenance, and my God.*

(5.) The concluding Argument is, that *ſufficient to the Day is the Evil thereof.* Tho' we ſhould fix our ſelves to all the ſtudied Calmneſs we are able, yet for our Sins the Providence of God has order'd

order'd such a Vicissitude in all things here, that something or other possibly may happen to try our Patience every day we live, or if it should not, the returning Wants and Necessities of Men will daily engage them in Cares and Business troublesome enough; so that it is a foolish thing for us to overcharge our present Hours (sufficiently burdened already) with the Fears and Fancies of the Time to come; of Wants which we may never suffer, of Sorrows and Disappointments which we may never meet with, and Provision for Age we may never live to, or for Children that may never live to enjoy it. We are exposed to unavoidable Trouble enough every day; let us endeavour to bear that, when it shall happen, as becomes us; but let us not be so absurdly greedy of Vexation, as to anticipate Troubles, which are yet at a distance, and are at most but Possibilities.

These are the Arguments our Saviour has thought fit to use, the Reasons he has given, why we should not lay up Treasures upon Earth. Thus far he has condescended to *perswade* us. But if we will not be *convinced* by him, we must nevertheless be *judg'd* by him: and whatever our Worldly Notions are of Policy and Pru-

Prudence, that Man will then appear the wiſeſt, and ſhall prove the happieſt, who has in this Life bent his Thoughts moſt ſeriouſly to another; deſpiſing Riches, and committing himſelf, and all that belongs to him, to the good Providence of God by Faith, diſperſing chearfully to the Poor, and labouring only to lay up Treaſures in Heaven, which can never periſh.

CHAP. XII.

Of CENSURE *and of* REPROOF.

MATT. VII. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

Judge not, that ye be not judged.
For with what Judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: And with what Measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.
And why beholdest thou the Mote that is in thy Brother's Eye, but considerest not the Beam that is in thine own Eye?
Or how wilt thou say to thy Brother, Let me pull out the Mote out of thine Eye, and behold a Beam is in thine own Eye?
Thou Hypocrite, first cast out the Beam out of thine own Eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the Mote out of thy Brother's Eye.
Give not that which is holy unto Dogs, neither cast ye your Pearls before Swine, lest they trample them under their Feet, and turn again and rent you.

Our

OUR Saviour's Design in this Paragraph, is the same with most of the foregoing, to correct the *Jewish* Misinterpretations of the Moral Law. They found there a Command to *rebuke their Brethren, and not to suffer Sin upon them.* From hence that proud, ill-natur'd People took the Liberty of censuring one another with the utmost Rigour; hoping by their affected Strictness in condemning what was ill in others, the better to conceal their own Vices. Thus we meet with a Pharisee censuring his Neighbour, even in his Prayers to God, *God, I thank thee, that I am not as other Men are, Extortioners, unjust, Adulterers, or even as this Publican.* This and some other Mistakes in the Duty of Reproof, our Saviour here endeavours to rectify, as tho' he should say,

Lev. 19. 17.

Luke 18. 11.

"Be not rash and severe in your Cen-
"sures. Do not readily give Ear to every
"malicious Story, nor be apt your selves
"to surmise the worst of other Peoples
"Actions, lest ye provoke both God
"and Man, to use you in Proportion as
"ye have done your Neighbour: For
"ye must expect from the Justice of God

" to be judged with the like Candour " or Rigour ye have shewn to others; " and such is the common Method of " proceeding amongst Men, that whoso- " ever gives no Quarter, must expect " none. But especially it is unreasonable " for those, who are guilty of gross and " scandalous Sins, (which often is the " Case) demurely to correct, reprove, " and exclaim against others for Faults " of little Concern, and hardly worth " the Notice: He who would reform a- " nother, must begin with himself, that " it may appear he reproves not out of a " censorious Humour, but from a real " Aversion to every Thing that is evil, " and a real Charity to the Offender, " and that he may set about it with " Discretion, and perform it with a de- " cent Authority. Nor is Reproof al- " ways proper, we must distinguish be- " tween such Persons as *are*, and such " as *are not likely to be amended by it.* " Some Men are so incorrigible, that it " would be cast away upon them, like " holy Things thrown to Dogs, and " Pearls to Swine. Nay, perhaps they " may rather be made worse than better " by it, not only despising but abusing " both your Advice and your Charity. " And in this Case you will only expose

" your

" your self, instead of reforming them.

In explaining of this Paragraph a little farther, let us consider more distinctly,

I. What Sort of Judging is here forbidden us?

II. The Necessity of amending our own Lives, in Order to the reforming of others.

III. The Meaning of this Advice, of not attempting Reproof where it is not likely to have a good Effect.

I. *What Sort of Judging is here forbidden us?* Were not Reproof a Duty incumbent upon every private Christian, as Occasion requires, I should not take these Words to be a Prohibition of *rash* and *severe censuring* only, but of medling *at all* with other Mens Matters; and indeed when we do censure Men, tho' never so justly, without designing them or Religion any Service by it, but only the gratifying our own malicious Temper, we certainly offend against this Precept. But beside the Necessity of a good Intention, as the Ground or only reasonable Pretence of all censuring of others, we must take Care that our Censures be not rash and severe, for such they are, if we either,

(1.) *Give Credit to every Thing that can be ſaid ill of a Man.* There is not that Story which can be invented to the Diſreputation of another, tho' never ſo groundleſs and improbable, (nay, I may ſay almoſt impoſſible) but ſome will greedily receive and ſwallow it. 'Tis an ill-natur'd Eaſineſs of Belief theſe People are guilty of: The Caſe is otherwiſe, when any Thing is told (whether falſe or true) to the Advantage of a Man: For then how difficult is the Credit, how lazily does it circulate? But theſe ſame Perſons, who are cautious enough of being impoſed upon by a Lye in *other* Matters, as thinking it a Reflection upon their Judgments, hardly ever queſtion the Truth of a *Defamation*; and look upon it, as a ſufficient Excuſe, not only for believing, but reporting the moſt egregious Falſhoods of this Kind, that indeed *they heard ſo.* They may deceive themſelves and others, with a pretended Deteſtation of the Offence, and Concern for the Offender, but it really proceeds from a Pride of raiſing their own Reputation by the Ruin of another's. And this Vanity is an Encouragement to envious and malicious People, to *invent* Lyes of their Neighbours, becauſe they know that moſt Men are very ready to believe and hearken to ſuch Stories.

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This is certainly one Inſtance of raſh Judging. Another is,

(2.) *When we judge Men to be wicked, becauſe they are unfortunate*, becauſe it has pleas'd God to afflict them with ſome Calamity. This was the Error of *Job*'s Friends, from which that upright Man endeavours to free them, by ſhewing them to be to blame in condemning a Man's Innocency by his Afflictions. And if it was a great Crime in them at that Time, it is much worſe now a-days in Chriſtians, yet is there no Practice more common. Some are ſo given to this Kind of Cenſure, that they cannot hear of any, the leaſt Loſs, befallen a Neighbour, but they preſently ſuſpect the Perſon guilty of ſome Crime, for which they tell you, this is a Judgment of God upon him. But St. *Paul* tells us, that *whom the Lord loveth he chaſtneth, and ſcourgeth every Son whom he receiveth.* Heb. 12. 6. The Revelation of a future Judgment, and of Rewards and Puniſhments in another Life, makes this barbarous Cuſtom, of adding to Peoples Afflictions, very unreaſonable, and an Inſtance of raſh Judging. Another is,

(3.) When we make the *worſt* of every Thing, which is *really ſinful* in Mens Actions, or believe an Offender to be

worse than he really is, when we condemn him as for an *Habit* only for a *single Act* of Sin: For certainly tho' *one profane Oath* discharged in Passion, or however else, and the being *once drunk*, is Sin, and calls for a deep Repentance before God, yet is not a Man for one, or perhaps two or three Acts of these, committed in his whole Life, to be esteemed a *common Swearer* or *Drunkard*. If these Offences be against the general Course and Bent of his Life, 'tis very uncharitable to rank him hereupon amongst scandalous and habitual Sinners. In like Manner, when we magnifie a Fault above its true Nature and Degree, when we affect to blacken any wicked Act, with more Aggravations than can be fairly gathered from the Circumstances of it: Or when, because a Man lives in the Practice of some Vices, we presume him guilty of every ill Thing our uncharitable Suspicion may suggest against him: Or when, because a Man *has been* notoriously bad, we conclude him *always* so, and are unwilling to suppose he either *has* repented, *or will* or *may* repent. And as reducible to this Head, when we pretend to judge of the Eternal State and Condition of Persons deceased, without any good Assurance, which 'tis very hard, and in most

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Caſes impoſſible for us to have, that they did not truly repent before Death, and are not received to Mercy. In all theſe Inſtances we are guilty of raſh Judging. And ſo we are,

(4.) When we cenſure and condemn *as Evil*, an Action that is really in its own Nature *indifferent*, and may be either Good or Bad, as Circumſtances (probably unknown, or at leaſt not conſidered by us) may determine it. It may perhaps be ſomewhat that *borders* too near upon Evil, or is *eaſily abuſed* to Evil; but is not Evil in the Nature of the Thing, and therefore capable of two Interpretations. To inſtance only in *keeping Company*, *Gaming*, *Dreſſing*, *Dancing*, (and there are many others of this kind) which *may be* innocent Diverſions, or they may be Crimes, according as they are uſed to good, or abuſed to ill Purpoſes, the Regularity, or the Miſbehaviour in them, or according to the Time we ſpend upon them. To judge favourably of theſe, when Circumſtances and Effects do make them criminal, is indeed to encourage Vanity and Vice: But on the other Hand, to cenſure them as Evil, tho' ſuch Effects and Circumſtances do not appear to render them ſo, is raſh and ſevere Judging, Moroſeneſs

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and ill Nature, not Religion. Or,

(5.) When we ſuſpect a *good* Action of *Hypocriſy*. By good Actions, I here mean not only ſuch as are *materially* Good, as the Practice of Family Prayer, frequenting the Church, receiving the Sacrament, giving liberally to the Poor, and, in a Word, all Works of Piety, Charity, Juſtice, and Temperance; but theſe Works attended alſo with ſuch Circumſtances, that to a candid and unprejudiced Judgment, they appear *formally* and *really* good, and this, or the other Man whom we would cenſure, ſeems to do them from an *inward Principle of Conſcience* and *Sincerity*; nothing appearing to the contrary, either in his Performance of theſe, or in his general Character and Courſe of Life. For tho' 'tis poſſible, a Man may do any of theſe Things hypocritically, yet if he be not evidently guilty of ſome indulged, habitual Vice, that is inconſiſtent with ſincere Religion, or of ſomething peculiarly inconſiſtent with the goodneſs of that Action we pretend to judge of, we ought in Charity to preſume the beſt of him, and that what he does, is not from any ſecret, corrupt, and wicked Principle, but from an honeſt Mind, and conſequently his Action is *good*; and if we judge

judge otherwiſe of him and it, we judge *raſhly*. Nothing is more hard to pry into, or pronounce upon, than the Sincerity of Men's Hearts, in the Diſcharge of their Duty; for we can only hear their *Words*, and ſee their *Actions*, without a poſſibility of looking farther into their Thoughts, to diſcover the Spring or Principle that moves them. *The Heart may be deceitful indeed, and deſperately wicked; but who can know it?* God has told us by the Prophet *Jeremy*, Jer. 17. 9, 10. *I, the Lord, ſearch the Heart, I try the Reins, even to give to every Man, according to his Ways.* And *Solomon* acknowledges, that God alone can do this, *For* 1 Kings 8. 39. *thou, even thou only knoweſt the Hearts of all the Children of Men.* What *Inſolence* is it then for us to pretend to that, which God alone can do, as well as *Impertinence* to judge of what we cannot know, and *Uncharitableneſs* to judge hardly, of what we have no apparent Reaſon to cenſure! Yet nothing is more common, than this cenſorious and unchriſtian Practice, of condemning good Actions for Hypocriſy, eſpecially, where there is a ſecret Spleen to the Perſon that does them.

Theſe five Inſtances I think include all, that is meant here by raſh and ſe-

vere

vere judging. Let us proceed now to the ſecond general Head, to conſider,

II. *The Neceſſity of amending our own Lives, in order to the reforming of others.* This our Saviour directs as a Remedy againſt Cenſorioufneſs, and were it but effectually put in Practice, it would be a certain Cure: For we may obſerve, that, generally ſpeaking, the *worſt* Men are the moſt uncharitable this way. Notorious bad Men do it in hopes, that by repreſenting the Vertues of good Men, to be only Grimace and Hypocriſy at the bottom, their own Wickedneſs may come off with the better Credit, as it may ſeem impoſſible to be really Good, and themſelves the more generous Sinners of the Two, becauſe they don't ſo much as *pretend* to Vertue. Proud Men, who deſire to be thought better than the reſt of the World, do it as an *eaſier way* to gain a Reputation, than by a ſolid and extraordinary Goodneſs; while all the Pretence is, the Reformation of thoſe whom they cenſure; but whoever truly deſigns *that*, muſt begin at home, and reſolve to ſet an Example of true Goodneſs in his own Character. To be ſure, he muſt not be guilty of as great, or greater Sins, than thoſe which he reproves

proves, for it is, (1.) *Ridiculous in it ſelf*, for ſuch a Man to reprove. Every Body he attacks has a Retortion ready for him, and his own Conſcience will ſharpen the Sting of it, and the World will laugh at him. For him that has a Beam in his own Eye, to find fault with a Mote in his Brother's, is ſuch a viſible Affectation, ſuch an Overt-act of Hypocriſy, that it looks awkward and monſtrous. (2.) The Reproofs or Cenſures of ſuch a Man, inſtead of reforming, will really *harden* the Sinner. There is a Spirit of Contradiction in human Nature, which ſtrongly inclines and tempts Men to grow worſe, rather than to amend, when upon the Compariſon they find themſelves ſtill better Men (notwithſtanding all their Faults) than him who undertakes to correct them. They plainly ſee, that he does it not from any Senſe of Vertue, or real Opinion of the Enormity of Sin, but to give himſelf an Air of Demureneſs, and to fix a brand of Reproach upon them. So that ſuch Reproofs entirely loſe their Effect. And in Truth, on the other Hand, a Man that is given to Reproof, had need not only to be free from groſs and ſcandalous Offences himſelf, but to be eminent and exemplary in Religion, nor only exemplary in a great

great Degree of that particular Vertue, the contrary to which he ſets himſelf to correct in others, but to be well verſed in *all manner of Goodneſs*, and govern'd by a throughly Chriſtian Spirit. Becauſe whoever undertakes this Duty of reproving and reforming, can expect no Succeſs, if he do not manage it with *Judgment*, Meekneſs and Charity, and all theſe he muſt be ſupplied with by Religion. (1.) It is to be managed with *good Judgment*. Every Sin deſerves not the ſame meaſures of Reproof: Nor is a Perſon ever reclaim'd from any Sin by a Reproof improper for it, becauſe it appears in this Caſe, that the Reprover is miſtaken, and therefore a very improper Guide. But now a Knowledge of what Difference muſt be made in all our Reproofs and Admonitions, according to the Difference of the Sins reproved, is attainable no other way than by a perfect *Knowledge of our Religion*, that we may know what is commanded or forbidden; and in a *conſtant Practice of all the Duties and Vertues it requires*, that we may know to what Degrees they are practicable in this State of Infirmity, what may be effected by the Aſſiſtance of God's Holy Spirit, and what grains of Allowance muſt be

be made for the weakneſs of human Nature; all which will beſt be learnt by Experience in the Courſe of our own Chriſtian Warfare, and the Obſervations we make upon our ſelves. (2.) Reproof is to be given with *Meekneſs*; for a paſſionate, moroſe, or reproachful way of giving it, will ſooner exaſperate than reform. And how ſhall we attain to ſuch a Spirit of Meekneſs as is neceſſary in this Caſe, but by the effectual Influence of Religion upon our Minds, and a long practiſed Habit thereof, under the Conduct of God's Holy Spirit, and our own Endeavours. (3.) It is to be done with *Chriſtian Love and Charity:* For tho' the Rebukes of an Enemy out of ill-will to reproach and defame, may notwithſtanding help and reform a wiſe Man, yet the generality of Mankind are not to be reclaim'd, but by Admonitions that ſenſibly proceed from Love; they muſt be convinced, that what we ſay is really out of Kindneſs to them, before it will have any good Effect or Influence upon them, to amend their Lives. Now Charity is an high Attainment; St. *Paul* tells us, that *Love is the fulfilling of the Law*; ſo that if none but a charitable Man can effectually perform this Duty, the neceſſity of making great Advances towards

Rom. 13. 10.

wards religious Perfection in our own Lives, in order to the qualifying us for the reforming of others, is very evident. But I shall now hasten to the third and last Particular to be considered.

III. The meaning of this Advice, of *not attempting Reproof, where it is not likely to have a good Effect.* Our Saviour here forbids to put the Gospel under Contempt, or our own Persons into danger, by reproving unreasonable and brutish Men, such as will either despise and ridicule the Reproof we give, or hate us for it, and perhaps assault and put us in danger of our Lives thereupon: Only here we must take care, that we do not impose upon our selves with deceitful Excuses, and in Truth this Care ought to be so much the greater, because we are apt to be very negligent and backward to this Duty of Reproof, looking upon it as an irksome and unpleasing Thing to tell Men of their Faults, unpleasing both to our selves and them. Yet is it not better for both to undergo a little Trouble in this kind, than perish eternally together, one for continuing in his Sin, and the other for not reproving him? We are likewise apt to excuse our selves, by confounding Censure and Reproof;

proof; we would not be thought to be proud, uncharitable and cenſorious Perſons. But is there not a wide Difference between Phariſaical Cenſure, and the Reproofs of Chriſtian Charity. With ſuch Excuſes however Men often deceive themſelves, and neglect their Duty, throwing the blame upon the Obſtinacy of the Sinner, while all the Fault is in their own Remiſſneſs. But if there be really no ground for Hope, if the Perſon appear to be incorrigible, if he hath frequently rejected our Admonitions before, or the Reproofs of wiſer Men, if he be a Deſpiſer of all Religion; if he be one, who is ſo far from being likely to be reclaim'd by our Reproof, as that he ſhall laugh at it, or clamour upon us, or affront us for it, we are ſo far from being required to ſpend our Admonitions upon him, that we are here forbidden ſo to do.

CHAP. XIII.

Of Importunity in Prayer, and of Doing as we would be done by.

MATT. VII. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

Ask, and it shall be given you: Seek, and ye shall find: Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

For every one that asketh, receiveth: And he that seeketh, findeth: And to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.

Or what Man is there of you, whom if his Son ask Bread, will he give him a Stone?

Or if he ask a Fish, will he give him a Serpent?

If ye then being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven, give good Things to them that ask him?

Therefore all Things whatsoever ye would that Men should do to you, do ye even so

ſo to them: For this is the Law and the Prophets.

IN a former Paragraph, our Saviour gave us ſome Directions how to pray, cautioned us againſt Oſtentation and vain Repetitions in our Prayers, and preſcribed us a moſt excellent Form, in which we may addreſs our ſelves to God. Here His Deſign is to preſs us to a *fervent* and *continual* Exerciſe of Prayer, not only as a Duty, but as a neceſſary and ſucceſsful Means of obtaining at the Hands of God, all Bleſſings which we ſtand in Need of, temporal and eternal. And from God's dealing thus with us, like a tender Father, readily anſwering our Requeſts of all Things needful for us, our Saviour takes Occaſion to recommend the like affectionate Readineſs amongſt our ſelves, to all good Offices one towards another, doing freely for *others* what we our ſelves would think it reaſonable they ſhould in like Caſes do for *us*. As if he had ſaid,

"Whatſoever ye have Need of, apply "your ſelves to God for it by importu- "nate Prayer, and he will ſurely anſwer "your Petitions, either *in Kind*, the ve- "ry Thing ye deſire, or at leaſt *in Qua-*

" *lity*, ſomething which he knows to be
" really fitter for you, and that will be
" more to your Advantage. 'Tis fit that
" ye ſhould own his Power and Provi-
" dence, by ſuch an Application; and thoſe
" who do, ſhall taſte of his abundant
" Goodneſs. But if ye will not, ye
" may thank your ſelves for his with-
" holding the Bleſſing from you. Or if
" ye ask and have not, 'tis becauſe ye
" ask amiſs. A faint and ſeldom Re-
" queſt is only begging a Denial; the
" Majeſty of Heaven expects to be wait-
" ed on with frequent, earneſt, and hum-
" ble Petitions; an unwearied and re-
" peated Diligence; and if ye thus ſol-
" licit him, he will not deny you, for
" he has the Affection and Tenderneſs
" of a Father towards you. And what
" earthly Parent is there, who, if his
" Son ask of him any Thing neceſſary
" for Life, will mock at the Requeſt, by
" giving him an uſeleſs or an hurtful
" Thing? If then, Men, who are ſin-
" ful Creatures, paſſionate, weak and
" humourſome, have yet the Tender-
" neſs to give their Children what is
" good and fit for them; how much
" more ſhall the infinite Goodneſs of
" God, whoſe Children ye are, do ſo to
" thoſe who importunately pray to him

" for

" for it? Now as this Loving-Kindneſs " of God is an Encouragement to Prayer, " ſo it yields a Direction for your Conduct " towards your Neighbour. Since God " ſhews himſelf a compaſſionate Father " to Mankind, in beſtowing whatever " they requeſt that is really fit for them " to have, ye ought to treat one another " as Brethren, and do for others what- " ever ye could reaſonably expect they " ſhould do for you, were ye in their " Condition and they in your's: For this " is the Sum and Subſtance of your Duty " with Regard to Men, and of all that " the Law and the Prophets have ſaid " upon it.

In this Paragraph, there are two diſtinct Parts worthy of our farther Conſideration.

I. What Qualifications are requiſite to make our Prayers prevailing; or what is included in the Notion of importunate Prayer.

II. What is the Nature and Extent of this Rule, of doing as we would be done by, which is here called the Law and the Prophets.

I. I ſhall begin with the firſt, the *Qualifications* neceſſary to make our Pray-

ers *prevailing*, or what is meant by *Importunity* in Prayer. Whatever View we take of our Condition, whether with Regard to Soul or Body, we find our ſelves in ſuch a State of continual Dependance upon God, (the Exegencies of human Life ſo many, our own Inability to provide for them, ſo ſenſible and apparent) that one would think even the worſt of Men ſhould not need to be *excited* and *perſwaded* to *Prayer*; yet it ſeems the beſt of Men do need not only *Perſwaſion* but *Encouragement* to this Duty. The Reaſon is, becauſe tho' they know their Wants, and that God, and He alone, is *able* to ſupply them, they are conſcious of ſo much Sin in themſelves, that naturally (and without a Mediator) they have Reaſon to fear He *will not* hear them. *Chriſt* therefore, our great and only Mediator, as in other Places he aſſures us of his Interceſſion, does here excite and encourage us to apply unto God, with Aſſurances that if we do *we ſhall be heard*. But then 'tis expected our Prayers ſhould be *importunate*, that we may ſhew the deep Senſe we have of our own Wants, our real Deſire that God would hear us, and our ſteddy Expectation that he will. In Order to be accepted then, we are to pray with *Earneſtneſs*, and

with

with *Continuance* or *Perſeverance*, both which are included in *Importunity*.

Firſt, Then we muſt pray with Earneſtneſs. And this conſiſts chiefly in theſe two Things, Attention and Affection.

(1.) In *Attention*. When we preſent our ſelves before the infinite Majeſty of Heaven and Earth, to offer up our Praiſes and Petitions to him, what an Inſolence is it to trifle in that awful Preſence; to have our Eyes gazing about on every Object that may divert them; our Thoughts as little intereſted in what we ſay, as if we were repeating only an idle Charm? It is not enough ſurely to hurry over a Form of Words in Prayer, our Minds muſt conſider and attend to every Sentence with a cloſe and ſerious Application. Divine Worſhip is the Exerciſe of many Graces, the Exerciſe of Faith and Hope, Humility and Love. And how can we exerciſe theſe when our Minds are unconcerned? For theſe Graces are ſeated in the Soul, which is only able to recollect and conſider. *God is a Spirit, and they that worſhip him, muſt worſhip him in Spirit*, with the inward Attention of their Minds, as well as the outward Poſture of their Bodies, and Motion of their Lips. This therefore being

so necessary a Qualification of Prayer, yet such withal, as even the best disposed Minds find it hard enough to secure, it has been thought very proper and good Advice, that before we go to Prayer, we should employ a few Minutes in Preparation for that Duty, to recollect, compose, and fix our Thoughts, and place them upon the right Object, and restrain them to it, because Variety of Business and Objects, and Circumstances, are very apt to fill our Heads with a confused Train of Imaginations, which impertinently distract, and through the Infirmity of human Nature are not easily withstood by us. This certainly requires Care and Diligence in the *best of Men*; but let the Difficulty of Attention to such as these, be no Excuse for the profane and careless. There is a great deal of Difference betwixt the Distractions in Prayer, which good Men *cannot* avoid, and those which bad Men do not so much as *strive against*, or *endeavour to avoid*. The former are properly Failings and Sins of Infirmity, and will be pardoned, by a merciful God, as such, because they are *involuntary*; but the Carelessness of an irreligious Mind that *freely gives into* Distractions and vain Thoughts at such a Time, and allows the Eye to gaze about

at

at random, and (which is too often the Case) when, instead of joining in the Prayers and Praises of the Congregation, People are reading Letters, talking over News, whispering Remarks upon others, laughing, and giving themselves Airs, or the like. This, I say, is a gross Piece of Profaneness, 'tis no Infirmity, but a wilful Sin, a Contempt of the Presence of God, and a solemn Ridicule of all Religion. But,

(2.) Sincerity or Earnestness consists also in the *fervent Exercise of the Affections*: So St. *Paul* requires, that we should be *fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord.* Rom. 12. 11. And *Solomon* in the Name of God speaks thus, *My Son, give me thine Heart.* Prov. 23. 26. It is the HEART which God especially requires in all the Services of Religion, and particularly in the Offices of Devotion: for without this our Prayers are but as a *sounding Brass* and as a *tinkling Cymbal*; not only not acceptable, but grating and provoking to the Great God, to whom we speak. We are not only to know and mind what we say in Prayer, but our *sincere Desires* are to go along with every Petition, an *affectionate Thankfulness* with every Clause of our Praises, and a *devout Reverence*, and *Impressions suitable to what is said*, with every Acknow-

knowledgment of the awful Attributes of God therein. It is a mocking of God to pray for what we do not desire, and to give thanks for such things of which we have no Consideration or Esteem. God being the Great Judge and Discerner of Spirits, knows with what Temper and Inclination we come to him; and how can we expect he should bestow that upon us, which he knows we care not whether he does or no? many times what we had rather be without. As for instance, we pray that God would *not lead us into Temptation, but deliver us from Evil.* Who can ever imagine any Man to be in earnest in this Request, that knowingly and needlessly runs *himself* into Temptation every day; and tho' made conscious of his own Weakness by repeated Falls, will still be challenging, and wrestling still with an Antagonist whom he has found too strong for him? He knows the *Siren* that has often charm'd him to his Ruin, he owns his Folly, pretends to repent of it, and change his Measures; but 'tis a vain Pretence, while (with *Solomon*'s young Man void of Understanding) he daily goes the way to her House, and still frequents her Company. The Love of Wine, or the Influence and Example of his debauched Companions, have betray'd

tray'd him frequently to Intemperance; he confeſſes it, and reſolves to grow ſober and abſtemious; yet runs into the ſame Society as often as he can have it, and one Glaſs leads him on to another, till his Appetite has again overpower'd his Reaſon and his Vertue. Does ſuch a Man indeed deſire that God would keep him from Sin, when he ſo apparently delights in the Temptation? Or that God would preſerve him from Temptation, when he himſelf wantonly plays with it, nay even ſeeks it out, and tempts the Tempter? If therefore the Grace of God does not (according to the Letter of his Prayer) preſerve him from Temptation, and deliver him from Evil, it is not that *God refuſes to hear him*, or *denies his Requeſt*; but becauſe his Affection not going along with the Words, he does not *really deſire* this, and conſequently it is not his *Requeſt*, he does not *pray* for it; and tho' he may ſay the Lord's Prayer twenty times in a Day, he may *thank himſelf*, if nevertheleſs he falls into grievous Sins, and is overcome by many Temptations: For his *Heart*, as well as his *Voice*, muſt join, or God will not regard him. Did we but impartially examine into the State of our Affections, and compare our Prayers and our Conduct together, 'tis to be fear'd

fear'd much of the like Sincerity would appear in other Inſtances, which I have not time to mention. But ſurely at the very moment we are putting up Petitions to God, one tranſient Thought upon each of them before we utter them, will tell us whether we are in earneſt or no. 'Tis eaſy to think with my ſelf, whether I do indeed deſire this thing which I am about to ask: If I find I do not, 'tis in vain to ask it; and if I do, my Affections may be ſaid to go along with my Petition. This Method I would ſeriouſly recommend, that our Prayers may be a deliberate Act of the *Heart* and of the *Judgment*, as well as of the Tongue. And by what I have inſiſted on, it will appear, that by the Affections I do not mean that forced Fervency, which is rather a ſtraining and working up of the Paſſions; nor that meer Warmth of Imagination and Fancy, on which ſome People lay the ſtreſs of all Devotion, but a *regular, ſolid, rational, and ſincere Deſire* of what we pray for, which may take place in the Mind without extravagant Raptures and affected Tones and Poſtures. Thus much for that Sincerity or Earneſtneſs, which is one Branch of Importunity in Prayer.

The

The *Second* thing imply'd in Importunity in Prayer, is *Continuance* or *Perſeverance*. To this St. *Paul* excites the *Theſſalonians*; *Pray without ceaſing, in every thing give Thanks; for this is the Will of God concerning you.* And the *Philippians* alſo; *Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by Prayer and Supplication with Thankſgiving let your Requeſts be made known unto God.* And the ſame Apoſtle deſcribing to the *Epheſians* the Chriſtian Armour, with which he would have them always guarded and in readineſs, adds in the Cloſe as a material Part of it, *Praying always with all Prayer and Supplication, and watching thereunto with all Perſeverance.* And our Saviour here implies the ſame thing, by the Repetition of his Command, ſo often in a Variety of Words, *Ask, ſeek, knock*; that is, pray frequently, or continue praying, with an unwearied Diligence. Now let us ſee what is included in the Perſeverance, to which theſe and many other Places of Scripture preſs us.

1 Theſſ. 5. 17.

Phil. 5. 17.

Eph. 6, 13.

(1.) It imports an *habitual Diſpoſition* to pray, and this implies an inwrought Habit of fearing, loving, and honouring God: for as the Nature of Prayer is deſcribed, in general, to be an Intercourſe or Converſation of the Soul with God, that

that Intercourse can never be carry'd on without honourable and worthy Thoughts of God; and he that has that Sense of God *truly*, will have it *habitually*; and he that has it *habitually*, will exert it *frequently*. Such a Soul will ascend to God upon all Occasions, and by often Returns and Emotions; and this Sense of the Duty reconciles those Expressions in Holy Scripture, of *praying always*, and *continuing instant in Prayer*, not only to a Possibility, but to Easiness and Familiarity: For the Soul of a Man is quick and agil, it can enter the Courts of Heaven abstractedly, and offer a thousand Petitions, while the Body is but dressing and preparing for the Temple; and there is no honest Affair in the World, how laborious and troublesome soever, that can hinder this spiritual Commerce.

(2.) Perseverance in Prayer implies likewise a Fervency of more set and solemn Applications to God at all proper Opportunities, and on all Occasions; we either want or receive something at his Hands continually, our Souls and Bodies, our Estates and Employments, our Families and Relations, the State of the Church, or that of the Public, afford us Matter enough every day we live to apply our selves to God by Supplications, or by Praises.

Praiſes. Morning and Evening is the leaſt we can think our ſelves obliged to. *It is a good thing*, ſays Holy *David*, *to give thanks unto the Lord, and to ſing Praiſes unto thy Name, O thou moſt High; to ſhew forth thy Loving Kindneſs in the Morning, and thy Faithfulneſs every Night.* Even the Times of our Eating, the Returns of our ſtated Meals, require us to pray for a Bleſſing on the Food he gives us, and to praiſe him for it, according to the Example of our Bleſſed Lord himſelf, who always did ſo, when he ſate down to eat. And beſides theſe fix'd and conſtant Occaſions, the Accidents we ſee, and the Accidents we hear of, our Sickneſs, our Health, our Encreaſe, or our Loſſes, our ſpiritual State, our Converſation, and our Buſineſs, and our Recreation; theſe all call upon us to call upon God very frequently, either to deprecate his Diſpleaſure, or to beg his Aſſiſtance; to implore his Grace, or to own his Providence, and to praiſe his Goodneſs, and he that does this may be ſaid to pray continually. Thus far a Man may proceed privately; but becauſe Prayer is likewiſe a public Act of Religion, and that God requires that we ſhould honour him before Men, and in the Face of the World, therefore are we obliged,

Pſal. 92. 1, 2.

Mat. 14. 19. Mat. 15. 36. Luke 24. 30.

(3.) To

(3.) To neglect as few Opportunities as is possible, of *assembling our selves publicly* to worship God with united Souls, and combined and conjugated Affections, assisting and enflaming one another. The Church has appointed a *daily* Service for the Worship of God in public, which has been practised from the very first Beginning of the Christian Religion, by the Apostles themselves, and the Primitive Christians. The *Jews* had stated Hours of daily Prayers, and the Apostles and first Believers resorted to the Temple at those Hours; so it is said of St. *Peter* and St. *John*, that they went up into the Temple at the Hour of Prayer, being the ninth Hour. And there is nothing more manifest in the Writings of the antient Christians, than that they observed stated Times of public Worship daily and nightly too: for during the Ages of Persecution they were forced to assemble in the Night; and in the following Ages, when Persecution ceased, and so the Occasion of those nightly Assemblies ceased likewise; yet in some Places, especially when a Monastical Life came to be esteem'd, they continued still these nocturnal Offices. But the Church of *England* at the Reformation observed a most excellent Decorum in this matter, requiring only the

Morn-

Morning and *Evening* Service in her Liturgy, and these neither at any definite Hours, leaving that to the Wisdom of Governours, and the Convenience of Places, and the attending of *this* Service (as well as the private Exercise of Devotion) where the necessary Business of human Life will admit, may very well be look'd upon, as included in that acceptable Frequency which Importunity and Perseverance do imply.

(4.) Perseverance in Prayer implies *unweary'd* and *undiscouraged continuance in begging some particular Mercy*, tho' God seems not to regard us, nor does, in any Thing at present, look as if he would ever answer us in that Matter. That such an Importunity is an Act of Faith which God is well pleased with, and how long soever he may keep us in the Exercise of it, by seeming to take no notice of our Request, will certainly at length give a gracious Answer to, is several Times inculcated by our Saviour; as in that Parable of the unjust Judge, and the importunate Widow, the Moral of which is expressly declared to be, that *Men ought always to pray, and not to faint*; and in that other of the Housholder raised at Midnight by the *Importunity* of his Friend, tho' other Considerations Luke 18. 1, 2.

would not prevail to ſupply him with what he wanted. And that this is that very Perſeverance more immediately encouraged by our Saviour here, appears, in that he makes the Application of the laſt mentioned Parable, in the ſame Words with his Exhortation here, *Ask,* Luke 11. 9. *and it ſhall be given you; ſeek, and ye ſhall find; knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you.* The like Encouragement he gives alſo in his Conduct to the Woman of *Canaan,* who follow'd him with repeated Solicitations to heal her Daughter, and tho' ſharply anſwered and repuls'd, would take no denial; whereupon, as if he were overcome at length by her reſolute Perſeverance, he anſwered her, *O* Mat. 15. 28. *Woman, great is thy Faith: Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.* Such Perſeverance therefore is an act of Faith, moſt highly acceptable to God; when tho' all Circumſtances look dark about us, and we have long and earneſtly prayed, yet ſeem to have hitherto prayed in vain, and have no Proſpect of being anſwered ſtill, and every Thing carries an appearance, that we ſhall never gain our Point, we nevertheleſs hold on Praying, continue our earneſt Requeſts, and wait ſubmiſſively the Will of God concerning us. Hoping even againſt Hope, and with pious *Job,* reſol-

reſolving, *Tho' he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him.* We are not to ſuppoſe, that God's requiring or expecting this *Importunity*, is a meer Point of *Majeſty*. Tho' if it were, 'tis ſurely reaſonable, and the moſt exalted Creature in the Univerſe could not think much to wait upon the Soveraign and infinite Majeſty of God with its Requeſts, how long ſoever it might be before he would vouchſafe an Anſwer: Nor are we to imagine, that by repeated Solicitations we may tire him out, and ſo change his Mind, and oblige him to grant us what he had no Intention at firſt to yield to: For that were a weakneſs, of which the unchangeable Wiſdom of God is incapable. But he requires and expects it, becauſe he would *exerciſe our Faith in him*, and try us, whether we can firmly adhere to, and depend upon him under ſuch diſcouraging Delays and ſeeming Diſregard of us; and this too, *for our own ſakes*; that our Vertue being the brighter by ſuch an Exerciſe, may be the more glorioufly rewarded, and the Bleſſing we have ſo long deſired, may be the more acceptable to us, and more thankfully received by us, when it comes. For we pray, and perſevere in praying; the Mercy we pray for (provided it be really a Mercy, and will do us good)

Job 13. 15.

1 Pet. 1. 7.

will ſurely come at laſt: If we *thus ask*, it ſhall *be given* us; thus *ſeek*, we ſhall *find*; thus *knock*, it ſhall *be opened* to us. But then we muſt conſider the Matter of our Petitions, *what it is we ask for*; if it be Riches, or long Life, or Grandure and Honour in this World, to be *importunate* in begging theſe, is to be *impudent*; God has no where *promiſed them*; nay, he has *forbid* us to *ſet our Hearts upon them*; and therefore ſuch an Importunity about them, is not only vain and trifling, but *diſpleaſing* to him. For a ſickly Man to be importunate in begging Health; a Man under the preſſures of Poverty, ſuch Supplies as are neceſſary for him, or a change of his Condition for the better; a Man in Danger, or in any Affliction begging for Deliverance; or engaged in any lawful Undertaking of Moment, imploring Succeſs, and a Bleſſing on his Endeavours: In theſe, and the like Caſes, I ſay, 'tis *lawful* to be importunate, becauſe God has encouraged us to ask; but then the Concern being only Temporal, and the Glory of God, and our own real Good being, for ought we know more to be ſerved by denying, than by anſwering our Requeſt, the Importunity here muſt be always accompany'd with an humble and entire

Submiſſion

Submiſſion to God's Will and Wiſdom. This our Saviour's Example teaches us; who tho' he prayed thrice, and very earneſtly in the Garden, that he might not ſuffer, ſtill corrected his Deſires with, *nevertheleſs, not my Will, but thine be done.* But when we pray for ſpiritual Bleſſings, for pardon of Sin, and for the Grace of God, Importunity has its full Scope; it is not only lawful, but a *Vertue* here; and we may ſollicite abſolutely *for them*, and muſt never ceaſe, till we obtain them. Thus I have gone through the firſt Part of the Paragraph, I come now to the Second.

II. The great Rule of *Doing as we would be done by*, than which nothing is a more equitable, or a more eaſy Guide for our Behaviour in the Offices of Society, or Civil Life, towards all with whom we have to do. The Equity of it is ſo viſible, that it needs no Proof; the univerſal Reaſon of Mankind agrees to it in the Theory, tho' their Appetites and Paſſions hurry them beſide the Practice. Nay, ſo fond of it was that brave and virtuous *Roman* Emperor *Alex. Severus*, tho' an *Heathen*, that giving it the Negative Turn, he cauſed it to be wrote in Letters of Gold over the Gates of his Pa-

lace, and in other public Places; *Quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris; What you would not have others do to YOU, do not you to OTHERS.* And the easiness of this Rule, is as great as the Equity of it: For 'tis a Guide which every Man carries in his own Breast, whereby he can readily determine, without recurring to large Volumes of Laws, or Systems of Morality, or Courts of Judicature, what is just and fit for him to do with Respect to another; he needs but turn the Tables, and suppose his *Neighbours Case* to be his own, and *His* his Neighbours, and then he has his Direction at Hand; what usage he should give, by considering what usage he would expect. We are commanded *to love our Neighbour as our| selves*; but our Partiality in this, and the Difference we are apt to make, in the way of Love and Esteem, betwixt our selves and others, is the Cause of all Injustice. Now this Selfishness, is what the Precept here of *doing as we would be done by*, is designed to correct. And the Rule is so true and exact in it self, that were it not for the Corruption of human Nature, which triumphs in nothing more than in perverting and debauching that which should reform it, one might pronounce it to

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hold good in all Caſes without Bounds or Limitations; but becauſe the very beſt Things are liable to abuſe, and the wiſeſt Maxims may be ſtretch'd beyond the Deſign and Reaſon of them, it will be neceſſary ſo to reſtrain our preſent Rule, that it may not lead us beyond what is *lawful* or *reaſonable* to be done.

(1.) We muſt confine it to Things that are *Lawful*, or not prohibited by the Word of God: For elſe the Scriptures would be contradictory, if by this Rule of *Doing as we would be done by*, we were obliged or allow'd to do to others, what by other plain and evident Texts we are forbid to do, or to deſire. My Friend deſires me to tell a Lye for him to excuſe him, or to ſpread a falſe Story about for his Advantage; or tho' he don't deſire it; yet I think it would ſerve his Intereſt, and what then? Tho' I my ſelf ſhould be ſo wicked, or ſo weak, as to deſire the like of another, or be glad of its being done on my Account, yet will this Rule by no means juſtifie my doing ſo for any Body elſe, becauſe it is ſinful either for me either to tell a Lye my ſelf, or to deſire another ſhould; in like manner, it will be no excuſe to a cheating Gameſter, that he will give the Perſon he games with leave to cheat him

if he can; nor to him that endeavours to make his Companion *drunk*, that he is very willing to be made as drunk himself; becauſe Cheating and Drunkenneſs are Sins, and no pretences whatſoever can qualifie the Guilt. This Maxim therefore, of doing as we would be done by, was never deſign'd to make Men lawleſs, or ſuch an abſolute Law to themſelves, that whatſoever they can reciprocally deſire or ſubmit to, ſhould be lawful. It ought to be *firſt* known that the Thing is lawful, before the Rule can be applied; which, ſtrictly ſpeaking, is not ſo much a Law it ſelf, as a Meaſure of performing other Duties to our Neighbour.

(2.) We muſt confine it to Things that are *reaſonable*, or fit to be done. Some Things are lawful, which are not expedient: It is lawful for me to give away a good Part of my Eſtate, or any particular valuable Poſſeſſion that I have, to whomſoever I think fit; but if a Neighbour of mine ſhould come to me, and with a ſerious Face ſhould *deſire* me to ſettle ſuch a Lordſhip upon him, *&c.* I dare ſay all the World would agree, it was a very imprudent and unreaſonable Requeſt; and tho' he ſhould preſs me an hundred Times over with the Rule

of

of *doing as I would be done by* (for it is not to be deny'd that I ſhould gladly receive ſuch a Favour and Benefaction my ſelf from any other Perſon) he would be as often told, it was a Thing *undecent to be ask'd, impertinent to be expected*, and *unfit to be done*. To inſtance in another Thing not reduceable to this Rule, no Judge or Magiſtrate is obliged thereby to pardon a notorious Offender againſt the Laws, upon thinking with himſelf, that truly was he in the Malefactor's place, he would be very deſirous to be pardoned. The Rule breaks here, becauſe tho' 'tis natural to an Offender to deprecate the Puniſhment due to his Offence, *it is not fit* or *reaſonable* the Magiſtrate ſhould hearken to him; for he acts in a public Capacity, and muſt conſider the Reverence due to the Laws, the Peace and good Order of the Public, more than the Benefit of any private Perſon. Again, a Perſon who is in very indifferent Circumſtances, deſires me to be bound with him for a conſiderable Sum, which he is not likely to pay, and if I pay it my ſelf, it will be a great Detriment and Wrong to my Family; I am not by this Rule obliged to anſwer his Deſire, tho' I ſhould be glad, if the Caſe were my own, as it is his, that another

another would do the same for me; because it is reasonable I should consider my own Family and Circumstances in the first Place; I am to love my Neighbour as my self, but I am not obliged to love him *better*, and to do my self a great Injury for the doing him a Benefit. Many other Instances might be given, but there is no Need to enlarge. Religion and Prudence must govern us in this as well as in every other Duty. I will therefore take a short and general View of what is indeed the proper Application of this Rule. Let a Child, a Subject, or a Servant, but ask himself without Partiality, what Honour, what Submission, what Obedience he would think was due to him, were he himself a Father, Magistrate, or Master, and his Answer to this would be a Rule for his own Behaviour towards those that are so related to him. The same will hold in all other relative Duties; and hereby may be discerned the Equity of reverencing Superiors, of being civil and courteous to Equals, gentle to Inferiors, and just and charitable to all Mankind. It would keep us from an insolent and surly Carriage towards any one, from despising and ridiculing, from upbraiding and provoking, if we do but seriously consider how ill we our selves could

bear

bear this from another. It would teach us to forbear and forgive, becauſe we deſire in our Turns to be forborn and forgiven. It would make us candid and good natured, in putting the beſt Interpretation upon the Words and Actions of others, if we reflect but how reaſonable we think it, that another ſhould deal ſo candidly with us. The Poor may be convinced by it, of the Unreaſonableneſs of maligning and envying the Rich the Advantage of their Riches. And theſe would alſo ſee the Unreaſonableneſs of refuſing Relief and Aſſiſtance to the Poor, becauſe each of them would in the others Circumſtances expect a contrary Behaviour. Let but the Rich and the Poor change Places, and then they who before cry'd out of the Pride and Arrogance of great Men, will think it hard to be called proud, only for keeping up the neceſſary Port and Grandure of their Stations: And they who before condemn'd the Lazineſs of the Poor, and thought themſelves to have a Right of doing wholly what they pleas'd with their own, will then think it hard, when neceſſitous, not to be pitied, ſupported, and relieved, by thoſe who are able. A reaſonable Kindneſs requir'd by any *one*, will be readily done, when we conſider that we our ſelves

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ſtand in Need of the Kindneſs of others, and would think it very ill-natured to have a neighbourly Office refuſed us. Thoſe that are now ſo fond of running up and down from Company to Company, with ſcandalous Stories and venomous Reflections upon a Neighbour, would find a better Employment, if they would conſider how they would reſent it, to be ſo uſed and traduced themſelves. Let us be exactly juſt in all our Dealings with others, as we would aſſuredly have *others* juſt in all their Dealings with *us*. Theſe are the chief general Inſtances wherein this Rule of *Doing as we would be done by* muſt take Place. Particulars are reducible thereto by every Man's private Conſcience, as Circumſtances ariſe, to bring them under Conſideration. I will now only in a few Words conſider, what is meant by our Saviour, in ſaying that this Rule is the *Law and the Prophets*, and then conclude. His Meaning I conceive to be no more than this, "That "it is the Sum or Subſtance of all that "the Prophets have laid down with Reſpect to the Commandments of the "ſecond Table, *our Duty towards our "Neighbour*. 'Tis no new Precept in "the Senſe of it, whatever it may be "in Terms: For the Law and the Pro-

"phets,

" phets, in all particular Directions " they have given for our Conduct one " to another, have ſaid thus much alrea- " dy *in Effect*, and in Effect *no more than* " *this*, that we *ſhould uſe others as we* " *would be uſed our ſelves*. But to carry the Meaning of it higher, ſo as to ſuppoſe it to comprehend the *whole* Duty of a Chriſtian, is an impious Pretence to deſtroy the Commandments of the firſt Table. And the Pretence is as unreaſonable as it is impious: For the Reaſon whereupon this Rule is grounded, cannot poſſibly extend it farther than our Duty to *Mankind*, who tho' they differ in ſome Circumſtances, yet being made of the ſame Materials, coming all from the ſame Stock, and going all to the ſame Place, the Grave, they may be ſaid in Nature to be *equal*; and this Equality is the Foundation of the Right of reciprocal Love, and of the which is conſequent thereupon, of *Doing as we would be done by*. It is enough that we love our Neighbour *as our ſelves*; becauſe he is of the ſame Kind with us, and to love him more would be as unjuſt as to love him leſs than our ſelves. But God being infinite in all Perfection, we ought to love him infinitely *better* than our ſelves; there ought to be no Meaſure of

of our Love to *Him*, but to love Him with all our Heart, with all our Soul, and with all our Strength; there can be no turning of the Tables, and therefore no Place for this Rule betwixt him and us. Since then this Rule will carry us no farther than our Duty to Men, 'tis certainly but one half, and not the whole of what a Christian has to do; for without Dispute he owes a Duty to God as well as to Man: And to the one as well as to the other, is this same Expression, the Law and the Prophets, elsewhere apply'd by our Saviour, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind; this is the first and great Commandment. The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self. On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.*

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

Of the Difficulties of the CHRISTIAN LIFE.

MATT. VII. 13, 14.

Enter ye in at the ſtrait Gate: for wide is the Gate, and broad is the Way, that leadeth to Deſtruction, and many there be that go in thereat.

Becauſe ſtrait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way, that leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it.

OUR Saviour having explain'd the Precepts of the Moral Law to a degree of Strictneſs and Perfection, far beyond what had been ever taught by the *Jewiſh* Doctors, it was natural to ſuppoſe his Audience

ence would be ſtartled at it; ſome perhaps would think him too ſevere and rigid in his Notions; that ſurely one might get to Heaven without ſo much ado about it; that it could not be ſuppoſed ſo many great Scholars as their Rabbies were, ſhould be miſtaken, and none of them underſtand the Depth and Meaning of the Law as well as He; and that ſo many devout and holy Men, their *Aſſideans*, *Phariſees*, and *Eſſenes*, ſhould be unacceptable to God, and in the wrong way to Happineſs. Others probably, who were convinced of the Juſtneſs of his Doctrine, might be frighted with the Proſpect of ſo many difficult Duties, deſpair of ever living up to ſo nice a Scheme, and reflecting how ſingular and unfaſhionable their Endeavours towards it muſt make them look, would rather chuſe to go on in that eaſier way wherein others went, and run the venture with the reſt. To both theſe ſorts of Men our Saviour ſeems to apply himſelf in this Paragraph, which, if I may be allowed to give you the Senſe of it in other Words, is as follows.

" Are ye allarmed at the Singularity of " my Doctrine, and the Severity of the " Morals I have laid before you? Be not " offended at either. 'Tis God that pre-

" ſcribes

" ſcribes your Duty, your Part is to do it.
" Whatever others teach, whatever o-
" thers practiſe, aſſure your ſelves that
" ſuch a Religion as will bring you ſafe
" to Heaven, is a ſevere and awful thing,
" and requires a greater Induſtry and
" Application than your Doctors have
" ſuggeſted to you. 'Tis hard but not
" impracticable; it may be attain'd to,
" but it muſt be with Labour: A ſtrait
" and difficult Path, and few will go a-
" long with you in it; but it leads to
" Happineſs, and 'tis infinitely worth
" your while, whatever Pains ye take in
" it. It's true, the Wiſe, the Learned,
" the Great, the Many of this World,
" that love to take up with an eaſy
" Scheme, which may indulge their Sen-
" ſes and their Paſſions, will beckon you
" another way, and count you ſingular
" and moroſe, if you comply not with
" them: But Truth is not to be deter-
" mined by the Number of thoſe that
" hold an Opinion, nor the Way to Hea-
" ven diſtinguiſhed by a Multitude of
" Examples. Beware therefore that an
" implicit Confidence in theſe miſlead
" you not: for the Road they take is
" broad indeed and ſmooth, and much
" frequented, but it leads to everlaſting
" Miſery.

The Gate and Way that leads to Life, being repreſented here as ſo ſtrait and narrow, that few will care to paſs thro' it, or to travail in it; in what Senſe muſt we underſtand that Declaration of our Saviour, that *his Yoke is eaſy, and his Burden light?* as alſo that of St. *John*, that his *Commandments are not grievous?* Here is no Contradiction, becauſe an Affair that has many Difficulties and much Perplexity in it, may yet be eaſy, in compariſon with another ſtill more laborious; that which is really toilſom in it ſelf, may yet upon ſome Conſiderations be not only well ſupported, but delightful; as that which is really eaſy and agreeable in its own Nature, may by Circumſtances be render'd grievous. To apply this to the preſent Queſtion; Chriſtianity is a Scheme of rational and noble Precepts, eaſy in themſelves to be performed; but through the Corruption of our Nature, the Force of that original Sin which has bent all our Faculties to what is evil, and the Power of Cuſtom, which has ſtrengthen'd it by inveterate Habits of Sin, Religion (being deſign'd to rectify theſe Diſtortions) muſt needs become a painful and ſevere Task to us. Yet difficult as it is, in ſuch unhappy Circumſtances a fervent Love of God will make it eaſy and de-

Mat. 11. 30.

1 John 5. 3.

lightful,

lightful, which is what the Apoſtle means when he ſays, that thoſe *Commandments are not grievous.* 'Tis eaſy, when we conſider the Strength of Divine Grace aſſiſting our Weakneſs; 'tis eaſy, when we are well accuſtomed to it, however difficult in the firſt Attempts; or at leaſt, whatever Difficulties we have to ſtruggle with in our whole Chriſtian Courſe, the exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory, which is the Prize we labour for, will ſmooth the Ruggedneſs of the Way, and make us eaſy in the Expectation of that bleſſed Hope; and take the matter how we will, the Syſtem of Chriſtianity is, upon the Compariſon, a far more eaſy Yoke, and a much lighter Burden, than the dark, and tedious, and numberleſs Ceremonies of the *Jewiſh* Law, or of the Heathen Superſtition.

But in what reſpects the Chriſtian Way to Heaven, is a difficult and uneaſy Path, will more fully appear, if we conſider,

I. What the Way to Happineſs is.
II. The many Impediments that are apt to divert Men out of it, or hinder their making any great Progreſs in it.

I. First, we must enquire *what the Way to Happiness* is, which may be resolved most suitably to our present Purpose in these Particulars.

(1.) It is a Way of Obedience. (2.) An Obedience that must be universal. (3.) That must be constant. And (4.) That must be cordial, or from the Heart.

(1.) The Way to Heaven lies in *Obedience*, *viz.* to the Laws and Precepts of the Gospel; and this is the first of those Instances which makes the Passage strait and troublesome to us. When Christ invites the weary Sinner, him who is laden with the Weight and Burden of his Sins, to come to him; and when he invites him to do this in order to his Ease and Rest; yet even then he tells him, that he must lay a Yoke upon him: *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest. Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me; for my Yoke is easy, and my Burden is light.* How easy soever it is made to us by his Assistance, yet observe that it is a Yoke still; and tho' it be light, by virtue of the Strength and Help that he gives to us, yet still *it is*, and is *stiled* a Burden, not in respect of the intrinsic Nature of his Precepts; for he has put no Hardships upon us, commanded

manded nothing that is in it ſelf impracticable or burdenſome; but meerly in regard of the Obedience that muſt be paid to them. For all Obedience is grievous to Human Nature; it ſuppoſes a Law, and a Law infers a Reſtraint, and all Reſtraint is troubleſome to them that underſtand themſelves no better than the Generality of Mankind do, according to the old and common Obſervation, *Nitimur in vetitum*; *We deſire to do that which is forbidden, and that becauſe it is forbidden.* Altho' it be very true, that the holy Precepts of our Lord, where they reſtrain us from doing of any thing, reſtrain us from our own Inconveniences; and where they determine to our Duty, determine to our Advantage, to do that which is good for us; yet ſuch is our natural Deſire of Liberty, of doing or omitting as we pleaſe, that all Reſtraint of this Liberty is Matter of Trouble to us.

But then, Secondly, this will yet farther appear, if we conſider, that the Way to Happineſs is *univerſal* or *general* Obedience to *all* Chriſt's Precepts, not only to thoſe that offer leſs Contradiction to our Appetites and Deſires, but even to thoſe, and thoſe eſpecially, which are levelled againſt the ſtrongeſt and moſt prevailing ſinful Inclinations in us. And thus St.

1 Tim. 6. 17. *Paul* writes to *Timothy*, *Charge them that are rich in this World, that they be not high-minded, nor truſt in uncertain Riches.* This Charge was to be given to them rather than any other, becauſe they were moſt expoſed here, and likelieſt to yield to that Temptation. The Prophet *Jeremy* ſuggeſts the ſame, *Let not the wiſe Man glory in his Wiſdom, neither let the mighty Man glory in his Might; let not the rich Man glory in his Riches.* The wiſe Man is not ſo likely to value himſelf upon his Power or Riches; nor the Man of Power upon his Wealth or Wiſdom; nor yet the rich Man upon his Sagacity or Might: He applies the Precept therefore to ſuch Inſtances, as it is moſt natural for a Man ſo qualified to place his Confidence in; againſt this he muſt eſpecially keep upon his guard, as the Vanity or Sin that does moſt eaſily beſet him. And this is one thing that much ſtraitens the Gate to Heaven: for Men would willingly in ſome reſpects, and in ſome inſtances, deny themſelves for a future Reward; but they would not do it in thoſe Inſtances wherein they are moſt of all concerned.

Jer. 9. 23.

Matt. 19. *Good Maſter*, ſays the young Man in the Goſpel, *what ſhall I do that I may have eternal Life?* Our Saviour anſwers, *Keep the Commandments*; and having repeated

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several of them to him, he tells our Saviour, *All those have I kept from my Youth up, what lack I yet?* To this it is answered, *If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the Poor, and thou shalt have Treasure in Heaven, and come and follow me.* And what did he answer to this Command? That follows in the next Words, *When he heard that Saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great Possessions.* See here how far a Man may go in obedience to those Precepts of Christ, where his own particular Inclinations are not peculiarly contradicted, and yet make a full Stand, when he finds any Contradiction in these. Here then lies the Straitness or Narrowness of the Gate which leads to Life, that it requires universal Obedience in all those very Cases and Instances, where we are most unwilling to it.

(3.) As this Obedience must be universal, so must it be *constant* also, and this still adds to the Difficulty. St. *Paul* having given the *Corinthians* a large Description of the glorious State of the Blessed in Heaven, after their Resurrection from the Dead, concludes it with these Words: *Therefore, my Beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord.* Sometimes

Mens Conſciences may be ſtruck with a ſudden Conviction of the Folly and the Danger of their Ways; ſometimes they quarrel with their Luſts by reaſon of that Shame and Suffering, which they bring upon them; ſometimes the Temptation is removed, the evil Company is withdrawn, the Tempter hides himſelf, and then the Luſt ſleeps, and while it ſleeps, it ſeems to be dead. But no ſooner doth the Temptation return, but then the Luſt awakes, the Sinner forgets his Convictions, forgets the Shame and Sufferings his Sins had formerly brought upon him, forgets the Reſolutions he made when he was under that Condition; he then violates his Intentions, breaks his Vows, and returns to the ſame Exceſs of Riot as before. But now the Obedience of the Goſpel muſt be ſtedfaſt, unmoveable; it muſt be ſuch as will continue as well when we are, as when we are not under Temptation. And this is the third of thoſe Particulars, which renders the Way and Gate to Heaven ſtrait and narrow. But likewiſe,

(4.) They that will enter the ſtrait Gate of everlaſting Happineſs, muſt be obedient *from the Heart*, or *ſincere* in their Obedience, which renders it ſo much the ſtraiter ſtill. Were it enough to put on

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a ſpecious Garb in all our external Converſation, only to hide our Luſts, and cover the Corruption that lurks within us, the Craft and Policy of this World would teach ſome Men to do their Duty; they would eaſily learn to ſmooth the Tongue, and oil the Lips, and bear the Appearance of ſuch Perſons as Chriſt requires his Diſciples to be. But now the Precepts of the Goſpel reach farther than to the outward Man, they require the Obedience of the Heart; and here indeed lies the greateſt Part of our Obedience; yea, and that which is moſt difficult to us. 'Tis no ſuch great matter of difficulty to forbear the outward Act that is forbidden; but for the proud and haughty Man to ſubdue his inward Pride, for a Man in Affliction to check all inward Murmuring, and bear it with a free Submiſſion to the Will of God; for the ſenſual Man to mortify and ſubdue his ſenſual Inclinations; for him that naturally loves Wealth to abandon his ſecret Veneration and Eſteem of it; for him that hath received an Injury, heartily to lay aſide all inward Malice, or Grudges, as well as actual Revenge; this is the Gate that leads to Heaven and Happineſs, and this indeed is a ſtrait Gate. Men may flatter themſelves with vain Hopes of getting to Heaven ſome other

other way; but it is certain there is no other than this, of ſincere, conſtant, univerſal Obedience to all Chriſt's Precepts, can bring them thither; which being in its nature a very ſtrait narrow Gate, it is to be fear'd that few Men will enter in at it, eſpecially conſidering there are many Impediments in their way; which brings me to my ſecond general Enquiry.

II. What the Impediments are, which are apt to divert Men out of it, or hinder them from making any great Progreſs in it. And they are principally,

(1.) *Natural Inclination.* Man was indeed at firſt created upright, with a Capacity for, and a prevailing Inclination to Holineſs, tho' yet with a Poſſibility of ſinning; but when *Adam* had ſinned away the original Perfection of his Nature, and by one wilful Act of Diſobedience corrupted all his Faculties; the Biaſs of his Mind was changed, his Underſtanding darkned, his Affections debauch'd, his Will diſtorted with a violent Bent to that which is evil: and this ſad Corruption runs in the Blood through every Creature deſcended from him. It appears betimes, even in the tender Age of Infancy, and ſticks cloſe to us in all the Periods of Human Life, in Youth, in Man-

Manhood, in old Age; and tho' it may by the Grace of God be kept in ſubjection, it is never totally conquered, even in the beſt of Men, till the Body return to Duſt, and the Spirit return to God who gave it. Now this is that *earthly* or *natural* Man, which ſavoureth not the things of Heaven, nor can at all reliſh them, without the Illuminations and ſtrong Impreſſions of Divine Grace; and even then, Nature is ſtill apt to return upon us, and overbear what is ſpiritual. How inclinable are we to all the Evils which the Goſpel prohibits, and how averſe to thoſe Duties which the Goſpel expreſly requires? What abundance of Pains muſt be taken with Men, what Arguments uſed, what Reaſons urged, what inward Checks and Convictions upon their Minds, before they can be induced to offer any Violence to this their corrupted Nature: And then when the Arguments that have been uſed, the Love of Happineſs, the Fear of Miſery in another World, the Senſe of God's infinite Favour in giving his Son to die for them, have wrought ſome better Inclinations in them; yet how many Degrees of their former natural Deſires and Appetites ſtill remain to be ſubdued? and what a Conflict muſt a Man have with himſelf, what Strifes and Wars in his

his own Breaſt, to reſiſt and oppoſe theſe Appetites? And yet all this muſt be done, we muſt mortify and ſubdue theſe corrupt Deſires, and Paſſions, and Averſions, before we ſhall be able to walk in the narrow Way, or enter in at the ſtrait Gate to Heaven.

(2.) A ſecond Impediment we have to ſtruggle with, is, the *Temptation of the Devil*, that ſubtil, that unwearied Sollicitor to Sin, who from his Hatred of God is continually fomenting the Rebellion againſt him; from the Malignity of his Nature, takes delight in Wickedneſs; and from his Envy to Mankind, induſtriouſly watches all Opportunities of enticing us into the *broad Way* of *Sin* and *Ruin*, or (if he can't prevail for that) to make our Way to Heaven as rough and troubleſome as he can, by plying us with vile Suggeſtions, by laying ſecret Snares for us, by giving us frequent Falls, diſquieting our Minds, and interrupting our religious Courſe by many Arts of Moleſtation. Indeed he is inviſible to us, we are not aware of his Approaches, but that renders his Temptation the more dangerous, he ſurpriſes us when we are leaſt provided, he applies himſelf to that Luſt which is moſt potent in us, and at that time when it is moſt enflamed, and in ſuch

ſuch manner as is moſt likely to work with us. He is a Spirit, and can inſinuate himſelf into our Minds with great advantage; his long Experience in Miſchief has rendered him politic and crafty, and his Malice makes him diligent, So that with great Reaſon it is, that St. *Peter* has cautioned us, *Be ſober, be vigilant, becauſe your Adverſary the Devil, as a roaring Lyon, walketh about, ſeeking whom he may devour; whom reſiſt, ſtedfaſt in the Faith.* And to the ſame purpoſe is that of St. *Paul, Put on the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to ſtand againſt the Wiles of the Devil. For we wreſtle not againſt Fleſh and Blood, but againſt Principalities, againſt Powers, againſt the Rulers of the Darkneſs of this World, againſt ſpiritual Wickedneſs in high Places.* We ſee then what an Enemy we have, who will, if poſſible, divert us from walking in the narrow Way, and entring in at the ſtrait Gate.

1 Pet. 5. 7, 8.

Eph. 6. 11.

(3.) A third Impediment is, *the many Snares that this World lays before us.* The Good and Evil, the Hopes and Fears of this preſent Life, divert us out of the Way to Heaven. The overbearing Opinion we have of what is neceſſary, convenient and beneficial to us here, is apt to work upon us ſo far, as to make us eagerly

eagerly to perſue the Advantages of this preſent World, with the Neglect of that Bleſſedneſs which is propoſed to us in the Life to come. We are apt to conſider things imperfectly, ſo as to give the Preference to Concernments of leſs value, but preſent; before thoſe of greater Worth, which are future. The Love of this preſent World, the Profits, Honours, and Pleaſures of it, draw Men aſide from ſpiritual things, and chain them down to vile Affections, alienate them from the Laws of God, and introduce them into a thouſand Frauds and Injuries to one another, and the Fear of Want or Poverty, Diſgrace or Danger in this Life, betray Men to baſe Actions, unworthy Arts, and ſinful Compliances, to avoid them.

a Tim. 4. 10. *Demas hath forſaken me*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *having loved this preſent World*, loved the Advantages, and fear'd the Dangers of *this preſent Life*; having conſidered things preſent, and not conſidered things to come, he hath abandoned me, and it may be the Truth it ſelf, to avoid the Dangers which attend me. Now ſeeing the things of this preſent Life have ſo ſtrong an Influence upon us, ſeeing we muſt reſiſt this Influence, if we will walk in the ſtrait Way, and mortify all Deſires of worldly things, take up our Croſs, and follow

follow Christ, if we will be his Disciples; it is evident what a mighty Difficulty or Obstruction this must be to us in our Way to Heaven.

(4.) Add hereunto, in the fourth place, the *ill Examples we have from other Men to lead us out of the right Way.* And this our Saviour here particularly cautions us against. Pride and Covetousness, Lust and Intemperance, Ambition, Malice, and the like, abound in all Corners of the World. The serving and indulging of these is the Principle by which the Generality of Men direct and form their own Lives, whatever the Word of God commands to the contrary. And when the greatest part live at such a rate as this, their Example will have a mighty force upon others, to move them to live after the same manner. *Be not deceived,* says St. *Paul, evil Communications corrupt good Manners.* And St. *Peter* gives this Warning to the Christians, to whom he wrote, *Beware lest ye also, being led away by the Error of the Wicked, fall from your own Stedfastness.* Imitation is natural unto Men, so that we are enclin'd to do like others, and are insensibly led into it: And while in some Vices, Fashion has almost made them reputable, or at least gives Countenance and Encouragement to them;

1 Cor. 15. 33.

2 Pet. 3. 14.

them; in others, Men are apt to think they cannot be ſafe, without doing the ſame things, and uſing the ſame Arts, which they ſee others do and uſe. Cuſtom either renders Truth and Vertue ſingular and ridiculous, or makes them ſeem dangerous and unſafe. So that Men chuſe rather to follow a Multitude to do Evil, than ſtraiten their own Meaſures by the ſlighted and unfaſhionable Maxims of Religion; and they find it very hard to bring themſelves to make a better Choice; ſo fatal a Temptation is ill Example. And upon all theſe Accounts above ſpecified, well might our Bleſſed Saviour affirm, that *wide is the Gate, and broad is the Way, that leadeth to Deſtruction, and many there be that go in thereat*; while at the ſame time, *ſtrait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way, that leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it.*

CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

Of False Teachers.

MATT. VII. 15,16,17,18,19,20.

Beware of False Prophets, which come to you in Sheeps Clothing, but inwardly they are ravening Wolves.

Ye shall know them by their Fruits: Do Men gather Grapes of Thorns, or Figs of Thistles?

Even so every good Tree bringeth forth good Fruit: But a corrupt Tree bringeth forth evil Fruit.

A good Tree cannot bring forth evil Fruit: Neither can a corrupt Tree bring forth good Fruit.

Every Tree that bringeth not forth good Fruit, is hewn down and cast into the Fire.

Wherefore by their Fruits ye shall know them.

OUR Blessed Lord, drawing to the Close of his Sermon, concludes it in this and the following Paragraph, in such a Manner as should most effectually enforce the Observation of the whole. And first, as a Guard or Fence to that most necessary practical Scheme of Religion, now advanced by him, he warns his Disciples against *False Teachers*, who for Ends and Interest of their own, would directly or indirectly debauch the Morals, as well as corrupt the Doctrine of the Church. His Caution given us hereupon seems to be to this Effect.

"The Duties and Vertues I have here "taught you, are of the last Importance "to the pleasing of God, and to the sa- "ving of your own Souls; and because "they are so, the Enemy of your Salva- "tion will labour by all possible Means "to divert you from attending to them. "For this Purpose he will raise up false "Teachers among you, who with plausi- "ble Shews of Zeal and Sincerity shall "be for tracing you out new Ways to "Heaven. Beware of them therefore, "and assure your selves, that whatever "Commission they pretend from me, "if they teach any Thing contrary to "what

" what I have taught, or lay the Stress
" of Religion any where, but where I
" have laid it, they are doing the Devil's
" Work, not mine; and whatever Appea-
" rances they may make of Sanctity, or
" Zeal, or Wisdom, they are building
" the Interests of their own Vanity or
" Avarice upon your Credulity, Weak-
" ness and Corruption: Examine the
" Fruits of their Doctrine, and ye will
" soon discover them. If it tend not to
" Charity, Peace and Purity, to an in-
" ward as well as outward Holiness, in
" all the Branches of it, according to
" my Gospel, ye may as well expect to
" gather Grapes of Thorns, or Figs of
" Thistles, as expect Salvation by such a
" Doctrine. If what they teach you
" were good, 'twould lead you to a good
" Life, but if it amuse you with other
" Things which serve not to this Pur-
" pose, or lead you contrary thereto, this
" Wisdom is not from above, but is
" earthly, sensual, devilish. The Na-
" ture of a Tree is known by its Fruit.
" And as every Tree that brings not forth
" good Fruit, how fair soever it appears
" in Leaves or Blossoms, is good for no-
" thing but the Fire: So shall that Pro-
" phet, notwithstanding his seeming
" Zeal and fair Pretences, have his Lot
" amongst the Wicked in eternal Fire,

" who does not both by his Life and " Doctrine, labour to recommend Religi- " on in that sincere and genuine Practice " of it, as it is here laid down by me.

In explaining this Paragraph farther, I will shew,

I. What Kind of false Prophets they are, of whom our Saviour here particularly forewarns us.

II. The Marks or Tokens whereby they may be known. I shall begin with the first.

I. *What Kind of false Prophets* they are, of whom our Saviour here particularly forewarns his Disciples. 'Tis plain by his Description of them, *as coming in Sheeps Clothing*, that they are no profes'd and open Enemies to Christianity; but such as under the Disguise of owning it, yea, and the Pretence of teaching it too, would corrupt the Simplicity of it. From the first Ages of the Gospel, there have been many erronious and heretical Doctrines scatter'd abroad, and some of them in the most essential and fundamental Points, as concerning the Divinity or the Humanity of Christ, the Union of the two Natures, and the like, about which some ignorant and some Philosophical Men vented most absurd and false Opinions.

nions. So did the *Simonians*, the *Cerinthians*, the *Ebionites*, the *Nicolaitans*, and other Hereticks, even while the Apostles lived, as appears by the frequent Admonitions and Warnings left upon Record, in their Epistles, against such Doctrines. Thus early the Enemy sow'd his Tares; and the Virgin Church under the Tuition of those inspired Guardians, the Apostles themselves, could no more be secured from Heresies *within*, than Persecutions from *without*: And if the Canker spread farther, and eat deeper in the following Ages, it is not at all to be wonder'd. To such false Prophets as these, this Caution of our Saviour may be extended. But considering that his whole Discourse foregoing was upon Precepts *purely practical*, the Morals of a vertuous Christian Life, as necessary to Salvation; if we will suppose any Connexion of this Paragraph with all that went before, we must conclude he more particularly points at such false Teachers as should *corrupt Mens Morals*, or (whether directly or indirectly) draw their Minds from the Simplicity and Practice of those Duties he had taught them. And amongst these may be reckoned,

(1.) Those who indulging the corrupt Nature of Man, *interpret away the Strictness of our Saviour's Precepts.* Who by

any Mis conduct in their preaching, loosen the Bonds of Christian Morality, and countenance a greater Latitude in Manners than the Instructions of their Lord will justify. 'Tis not to be supposed that any of them will openly and plainly set themselves against Religion, or commend or patronize any Vice, but there are Abundance of Ways of doing the same Thing in Effect. As when they palliate any sinful and immoral Habits under the Stile of Frailty and Infirmities, which are not really so. When by a lax Interpretation, they enervate the Force of such Prohibitions or Commands in Scripture, as are really in the genuine Sense and Design of them, very strict and extensive; when they industriously avoid preaching against such particular Sins, as they know some Persons of their Audience whom they have an Interest to please, or fear to disoblige, are guilty of; or upon the like Principle avoid insisting upon a severe and disagreeable Duty: Whereas the Prophet
Isa. 58. 1. *Isaiah* was commanded (and 'tis the part of every Christian Teacher) *to cry aloud, not to spare, to lift up his Voice like a Trumpet, and shew the People their Transgressions and their Sins*; which surely may and ought to be done, without any rude and personal Reflections; the Sin and not the Sinner must be struck at; Religion be promo-

promoted, but without Malice or Faction. Another Way whereby 'tis possible to encourage Sin, instead of preaching against it, is, exalting the Mercy of God in such an absolute Manner, as to leave Men under a vain Dependance upon it, or not plainly and expressly to contradict those Hopes, while they continue under the wilful Practice and Indulgence of their Sins. Such were those false Prophets whom God complains of, by the Mouth of *Jeremiah*, *They have healed the Hurt of the Daughter of my People slightly, saying, Peace, Peace, when there is no Peace.* Jer. 6. 14. I shall only instance in one other Method, which is a great Injustice to the severe Morality of the Gospel, and I'm afraid has often proved of very ill Consequence in buoying Men up in a fatal Security under a vicious Course of Life, and that is the flattering Eulogies and Characters given in *Funeral Sermons*, to Persons who with the Credit perhaps of one or two Vertues, have lived under the Guilt of many notorious Vices: Or the crying up *others* for Saints and perfect Patterns of Goodness, who lived but the common Life of Men, or but a little better; sober, and perhaps honest; constant at Church, and fair in their Dealings, but of whom nothing else appears, so exemplary either in positive Vertues, or in

their Exercise of Piety, as may justifie such a Canonization. Now what must the Audience naturally imagine hereupon, they knew the Person deceased, he was one of their Neighbour-hood; they knew him to have given himself many Liberties, whilest he lived in what they called Good-fellowship, or in prophane Swearing, or in Lewdness, or at best, we'll suppose they knew no harm by him. What must they conclude, when they hear the Minister so extravagant in his Praise, but that, according to the Doctrine of their spiritual Guide, if a Man signalize himself but in some one Vertue, he is in a safe way enough to Heaven, tho' he indulge himself in a course of many grievous Sins; a *Lord have Mercy*, when he is departing, shall be call'd Repentance; and a confident ill-grounded Presumption shall pass for Faith in Christ; and then all is well with him, as if he had lived the most strict and sanctified Life that could be. Or on Supposition of the latter Case, the harmless honest Man, who in all outward Appearance was neither very Good, nor very Bad; must not the Audience conclude, when they hear him cry'd up for a Saint, that such a Life as his, is even more than enough to bring them to Heaven; that to be so good, is a sort of Supererogation,

on, and that they are abundantly secured of being happy hereafter, tho' they should fall a little short of him, when yet comparing all that appear'd in him with the strict Rules of the Gospel, we are far from being sure, that he himself is Happy; and therefore should not be told with so much Confidence that he *is*. But whatever secret Vertues he had which do not appear to us, they may avail (and we may charitably suppose there were such) as to his own Salvation; yet what we did not see we cannot imitate, and therefore his outward Conversation only will be no safe Guide for ours.

(2.) Another sort of false Teachers, whom doubtless our Saviour had in view when he gave this Caution, are those *who with greater appearances of Sanctity and Devotion, will be refining upon his Scheme by superstitious Additions of their own.* Men cannot be too Holy, or too Devout; but they may be seduced to place Devotion and Holiness in that which really is not so. Sincerity and Fervency, together with an humble, decent, unaffected Seriousness in Posture, *make Devotion in Prayer.* A reverent Attendance upon God's Word and Sacraments, a strict conscientious Obedience paid to all his Laws, an uniform Love and Practice of every Vertue, and

every

every Duty towards God, our Neighbour, and our selves, according as they are traced out to us in the Holy Scriptures, *is Religion.* But what have some Men substituted in the room of these, who teach Men to place Devotion in the *number* or *length* of Prayers, instead of Fervency; and to place Religion in a round of pompous Formalities, and a thousand superstitious Observances, which God has never commanded. This may be Fancy and Folly, but it cannot be Religion; 'tis going out of the plain road to Heaven, which Christ has shewn us, into the By-paths of human Invention, which a jealous God will never countenance, and those that teach Men to do thus, are certainly false Teachers and Seducers. There is indeed a Principle within us, which will not suffer Men to be without a Concern for pleasing God in some way or other: They must have a Religion, whatever it is. And therefore consulting their own Lusts and Appetites as much as they can, they are most easily perswaded to take up with a *mechanical* Religion, consisting chiefly in an *outward Road of Performances*, how laborious and expensive soever they may be, than in such a *genuine Devotion* and *strict Vertue*, as the Laws of God prescribe: And thus they vainly think to com-

compound with God and their own Consciences, by abundance of the *Form*, to supply their Deficiences in, and their neglect of the *vital Power* of Godliness. Thus did the *Pharisees*, who to ease themselves of the harder Duties of *loving God with all their Heart, with all their Soul, and with all their Strength, and loving their Neighbours as themselves*, found a way to be satisfied with an outward ceremonious Purity, the *washing of Cups, and Pots, and brazen Vessels*, with many other the like trifling Observances, instead of the weightier Matters of the Law, postponing the Commandments of God, and rendring them of no Effect, by placing Religion where God had never placed it. Well may it be ask'd of such at the great Day, *Who has required these Things at your Hands?* I must add a third sort of false Teachers, equally included in this Caution.

(3.) Those who teach and require any Doctrine or Doctrines to be received, *as a necessary Condition of Salvation*; which were not taught and enforced as such by our Saviour and his Apostles. Now whether it be in Faith or Practice, or both, to preach or publish a Doctrine as an essential Part of the Christian Religion, and a necessary Term and Condition of Salvation, which was not so taught by Christ

Christ and his Apostles, tho' not a Doctrine contrary to what they taught, is to pervert the Christian Religion, and to corrupt the Professors of it. Christ has not left it in the Power of the Ministers or Officers of his Church, to add any new Doctrine to his Religion. St. *Paul*, who was an *Apostle* (as he describes himself in the beginning of his Epistle to the *Galatians*) *not of Men, neither by Man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father*; to whom, as he says farther, even the known Pillars of the Christian Church, *James*, *Cephas*, and *John*, *gave the right Hand of Fellowship*, viz. received him as a Companion equal to themselves; even this great Apostle disclaim'd all Power of teaching any other Doctrine, than what the Apostles had preach'd, and the Churches received. *But tho' we, or an Angel from Heaven*, says he, *preach any other Gospel unto you, than that we have preach'd unto you, let him be accursed.* Which shews, that the Foundation of the Christian Religion was *already* laid, and that the Gospel which was then preach'd, was not only immutable, but also *sufficient*: And that neither the inspired Apostles, nor the unsinning Angels might either add to it, or take away from it. But here I must interpose this Caution, that tho' the *essential*

sential Parts of the Christian Religion cannot be altered, nor can there be any Thing added thereto, nor taken away by any Power upon Earth: Yet our Saviour has committed into the Hands of the Ministers of his Kingdom, a Power not only to proclaim and divulge, to enforce and urge, to maintain and defend, but also to explicate and unfold those essential Articles, according to Occasions and Emergencies, and in Proportion to the Rule of Scripture, and the Analogy of Faith. Moreover, our Saviour has entrusted with the Ministers of his Church, a Power to make Constitutions and Canons relating to the external Regiment thereof, as also for the solemn Worship of God, and the Administration of the Sacraments, to appoint Times and Places of Worship, to determine smaller Controversies for Peace and Unity-sake, and to prevent Schism and Division. All this the Ministers of Christ may do, and be *true* and *faithful Teachers*, but to teach any Doctrine, contrary to the Doctrines of the Gospel, or to *add any Thing new*, as an essential Part of the Christian Religion, which was not made so by Christ and his Apostles, is to be a false Prophet.

(4.) And *Lastly*, Such also may be look'd upon as false Teachers, or Seducers

cers from the true way of Salvation, the practical Piety and Vertue of the Gospel, *who are continually entertaining their Congregation with unnecessary Disputes in Religion,* and turning their Heads and Hearts to an over eager Zeal for Notions, that are either Uncertain, or of little Importance. How many such Teachers are there in the World, who think themselves Happy enough, if they can but start some new Speculation to spend their Zeal upon; and Holy enough, if they do but furiously advance in their Instructions some Point of Doctrine (perhaps a meer Opinion) which happens in their Time to be deny'd by others, or oppose what others have asserted, tho' the Point in debate is *Lana Caprina,* an inconsiderable insignificant Thing to Salvation, which a Man may know or be ignorant of, believe or disbelieve, without being at all nearer to, or farther off from the Kingdom of Heaven? And what's the Consequence of this Teaching? It sublimates Religion to such Niceties, as to make it wholly evaporate at length in a Sett of airy and useless Notions; and draws off the Application of Men's Minds, and the warmth and vigour of their Spirits, from the Practice of Christian Duties and Vertues, to Things that are not only little to the Purpose

of

of their eternal Happineſs, and which will never enter into Account at the Examination in the Day of Judgment, whether they held the one ſide, or the other: But which really have a Conſequence directly oppoſite; as theſe Opinions prejudice them with a furious and uncharitable Biggotry, and perhaps a Spirit of Perſecution, (if it lye in their Power to exert it,) againſt thoſe that think not as they do. I ſpeak not here of ſuch Doctrinal Points, as the Divinity of Chriſt; or any other which may be clearly proved from Scripture, to be eſſential to the Chriſtian Religion, and conſequently to our Salvation by Chriſt. To preach up theſe ſteddily and zealouſly, is but earneſtly to contend for the Faith once delivered to the Saints; but I ſpeak of Matters as are more diſputable, more uncertain, and of leſs concern, I will not name them. Let every Teacher carefully and impartially examine his Doctrine by the Word of God, and let none of us be wiſe above what is written there, nor trouble our ſelves, nor amuſe our Audience with *Doctrines which have not profited them, that have been occupied therein.* I proceed now to ſhew, Heb. 13. 9.

II. *The Marks whereby a falſe Prophet may be diſcerned.* As to theſe I have in

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a great Measure fore-stalled my self, in what I have said already; for describing the *False Teachers*, I could no other way do it, than by describing those *Doctrines* which denominate and shew them to be such. The evil Tendency therefore of their Doctrines, and of their way of Teaching, to divert Men from the Esteem and Practice of Holiness, being pointed out by our Saviour himself, as the chief Mark whereby to discover these False Prophets (*For by their Fruits*, says he, *ye shall know them,*) and this being sufficiently spoken of under the foregoing Head; I shall not need to insist upon it here again. But there are two other Marks, that may help us in the discovery of them, worthy to be considered, *Pride* and *Covetousness*: The one or the other of these being the governing Principle, that induces such Men to their corrupt Teaching, will some way or other shew it self in their Conduct, if it be well observed, and therefore they may stand for farther Tokens, to distinguish them from the true Ministers of Christ.

(1.) *Pride* is very conspicuous in them, notwithstanding their great Dissimulation. A secret Thirst of being famed and talked of, makes them uneasy to be restrain'd to the ordinary Road of Preaching up a good Life, according to the plain and practi-

practical Tenor of the Gospel. They have here no Latitude to shew their Parts, or recommend their Learning, and raise themselves a Reputation, which they are vain enough to believe they merit, and therefore they affect either *Novelties* in Doctrine, that their Understanding and Wisdom may seem to be much above the Level of their Brethren, or a disputative and eager Zeal for some Party, or some Opinion already advanced by others, which they know is a popular way of entertaining an Audience, whose Passions are more easily and more acceptably gratified than their Reason, and who had rather be taught to rest themselves upon the *Borders* of Religion, than to be led into the *Heart* and *Bowels* of it, in such Duties as they do not care to practise. They know that the vicious Part of Mankind is much the greatest, and consequently to obtain a general Applause, they must not bear too hard upon Vice: They must sow Pillows under Mens Arm-holes, and bolster them up in an easy sort of Religion, that will bring them only to the *Surface* of Morality; and even this for *Form-sake*, for corrupt Nature it self can hardly be content without it; but to tell Men roundly of their Sins, to press them to a thorough Repentance and Amendment; to put them up-

on the necessary Exercise of all Christian Vertues and Duties, and to tell them plainly, there is no Salvation but in the way of sincere and serious Holiness; this they imagine would spoil their Credit with the People, and therefore they preach to them what is infinitely *less* to the Purpose of Religion, but *much more* to *their own*. Sometimes indeed when Religion happens to be in repute, their Affectations must correspond with it; and then it is observable, they carry Things to an extream: They screw Religion up to Superstition, and even their Garb, their Gesture, their Voice, their Phraseology or Expression, and every Thing else about them, is affected, that they may by these means come to be taken Notice of, and pass for Men of extraordinary Strictness and Holiness, Knowledge and Spiritual Gifts; these Singularities being mighty apt to strike People with a Veneration for them. And thus the Vanity of being admired, will shew it self in different Shapes, in some more directly, by an haughty Air, an imperious Conversation, a positive and pompous Way of Preaching, a vain-glorious Boasting mighty Things of themselves, and an Affectation of shewing their Parts and Learning: In others more craftily, by an affected false Humility, put on only

ly to excite the rest of the World, to praise and cry them up. Be ever jealous therefore what a proud Man teaches, compare it carefully with the Scriptures, and the Explications of better Men, and if it agree not with the latter, 'tis reasonable to be suspected; if it agree not with the former, he is certainly a false Teacher. But if nothing of Pride, or its Consequences appear in him, let it be well considered, whether there is not,

(2.) *Covetousness*, or a worldly Interest driving on in his Doctrine, and discernable in his Behaviour. That this is a Principle very natural to False Teachers, by which they are most commonly acted (and whereby they may easily be discovered) St. *Paul* intimates to us, when he speaks of some in his Time, *Who subverted whole Houses, teaching Things they ought not, for filthy Lucre sake.* Tit. 1. 11. And so in his Epistle to the *Romans* also, he fore-warns them, *Now I beseech you, Brethren, mark them which cause Divisions and Offences, contrary to the Doctrine which ye have learn'd; and avoid them: For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own Belly, and by good Words and fair Speeches, deceive the Hearts of the Simple.* Rom. 16. 17. St. *Peter* also has left it upon Record, that such there would be in after Ages of the Church. *There shall be False* 2 Pet. 2.

Teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable Heresies, &c. And through Covetousness, shall they with feign'd Words make Merchandize of you. The Love of Riches makes them teach what will *please* rather than what will *edify*, puts them forward to a disputative and Party Zeal, as more for their Purpose, than inculcating Piety and a good Life: *Dependance* makes them afraid to speak out plainly against Sin, or the sordid *Thirst* and *Prospect of some Gain*, induces them to flatter the Vices of their Audience, by unfaithful and corrupt Interpretations of the Word of God; or the like greedy Humour stirs them up to frame such new Doctrines, or advance such convenient Superstitions, as make to their own Profit and Advantage. Whereas a true Mi-
1 Cor. 10. 33. nister of Christ, *seeks not his own Profit, but the Profit of many, that they may be*
2 Cor. 2. 7. *saved. Wrongs no Man, corrupts no Man,*
1 Thes. 2. 5. *defrauds no Man. Neither at any Time uses flattering Words, nor a Cloke of*
Acts 4. 29. *Covetousness, as False Teachers do, but preaches the Word of God with all boldness*; whether it shall please or displease, and be an advantage or disadvantage to
Tit. 2. 7. him. *In all Things shewing himself a Pattern of good Works; in Doctrine shewing Uncorruptness, Gravity, Sincerity.*

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

Of the Neceſſity of Obeying the foregoing Precepts.

MATT. VII. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27.

Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: But he that doeth the Will of my Father, which is in Heaven.

Many will ſay to me in that Day, Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy Name? And in thy Name have caſt out Devils? And in thy Name done many wonderful Works?

And then will I profeſs unto them, I never knew you: Depart from me ye that work Iniquity.

Therefore, whoſoever heareth theſe ſayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wiſe Man, which built his Houſe upon a Rock:

And the Rain deſcended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew, and beat

upon that House: And it fell not, for it was founded upon a Rock.

And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish Man, which built his House upon the Sand:

And the Rain descended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew, and beat upon that House: And it fell, and great was the fall of it.

THE Conclusion of this most excellent Sermon of our Lord, does very aptly Crown the whole with one general and most important Doctrine, that the *Performance* of his Precepts, the *living up in Practice* to that noble Scheme of Religion which he has left us, is the only effectual Proof that we are Christians, the only safe Foundation for our Hopes of Heaven. Or if I may be allow'd to express his Sense in other Words; it is as follows,

"Having revealed to you the Will of "God so perfectly, that it is impossible "for you now to be mistaken in your "Duty, I expect, that ye my Disciples "should be as exact in your Obedience, "as I have been in my Revelation: For "the bare Profession of my Religion,

" the calling me Lord, Lord, without
" a Practice conformable to ſuch a Pro-
" feſſion, will be of no Advantage to
" you at the Day of Judgment. Many
" will ſay unto me in that Day, Lord,
" have not we ſufficiently proved
" our Diſciplehip by our extraordinary
" Zeal for thy Service, and great Per-
" formances in thy Name, ſuch as Pro-
" pheſying, caſting out Devils, and do-
" ing many wonderful Works. Theſe
" ſurely will entitle us to thy Favour
" and thy Kingdom; acknowledge us
" therefore as thy Followers, and re-
" ceive us into everlaſting Happineſs.
" But my Anſwer to ſuch vain Preten-
" ders will be, that tho' they taught
" my Religion, yet ſince they did not
" practiſe it; tho' they caſt Devils out
" of others, yet ſince they did not caſt
" all wickedneſs out of their own Heart;
" tho' they wrought many wonderful
" Works, yet ſince at the ſame Time,
" they wrought Unrighteouſneſs, they
" are no Diſciples of mine. Hence from
" my Preſence, *all ye workers of Iniquity.*
" For without a ſtrict and conſcientious
" Obedience to my Laws, in the Courſe
" of an Holy and Religious Life, Chri-
" ſtianity is but an empty Name, Zeal
" for it but a wrangling and contentious
" Heat, Salvation but an idle and de-

" ceitful Hope. He therefore, who not " only hears my Precepts but obeys them, " who orders his Life and Converſation " by the Rule of God's Word, as I have " delivered it to him, is like a wiſe Man " who lays the Foundation of his Houſe " upon a Rock, which thus founded " ſtands firm and ſecure againſt all the " Violence of Winds and Waves. But " he who grounds his Hopes of Accep- " tance and Salvation on any other Bot- " tom than ſuch ſincere Obedience, is " like a Man who builds his Houſe up- " on the Sand, which not being able to " withſtand the Fury of a Tempeſt, or " an impetuous Tide, will certainly be " beaten down about him, upon the firſt " Attacks of either, and thus his Houſe " ſhall periſh.

Since not our *Hearing* only, but our *Doing of the Will of God*, is declared by the Author of our Salvation to be the Rock alone, whereon we may ſafely build our Hopes of it; my Buſineſs muſt be to ſhew the meaning of this Expreſſion, or what is here to be underſtood by *doing the Will of God*. It is, in general, the being obedient to Chriſt's Laws, the doing of thoſe holy and righteous Works which he ordain'd we ſhould walk in, the fulfilling all Righteouſneſs eſtabliſhed in the Goſpel, and delivered in this

Ser-

Sermon. But to present you with a more distinct Explication of this, we are to consider,

I. That however diligent, zealous and successful we may be in doing those Things, which serve to *propagate* and *support* Christianity, or accidentally relate to it, as *Means* and *Instruments* of true Religion, 'tis not sufficient to reach the Extent of what is comprised in this Expression, *of doing the Will of God.* Men are not therefore the true Disciples of Christ, and effectually entituled to Salvation, because they can defend the Truths of Christianity, or labour hard to gain Proselytes to it, or even work Miracles in behalf of it, not because they constantly attend the Preaching of God's Word, the Prayers of the Church, or private Devotions of their own, or reading their Bible, or other instructive Books of Religion at certain Times of Leisure. These Things, tho' good and excellent in their kind, tho' of great Use and Service to the Church, tho' very advantageous to their own or other Mens Souls, are yet but the Means and Instruments, not the End and Substance of Religion. Attending diligently upon the outward Means of Grace, is a Duty necessary to every Christian; but not for its own Sake only; if

we

we ſtop there, 'tis all but vain Formality and Hypocriſy: 'Tis requiſite with relation to Faith and a good Life, but if they lead us not effectually to theſe, they will never bring us to Salvation. And therefore our Saviour declares, that at the Day of Judgment he will anſwer all ſuch after this manner, *I never knew you*, that is, I never approved or allowed of thoſe Faculties and Powers ye pretend to, *as the Condition* of being my Diſciples; and yet that was the great Power of Propheſying, and doing Miracles, as appears by the Pretence they are brought in to make, *Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy Name, and in thy Name have caſt out Devils, and in thy Name done many wonderful Works.* But ſince the great Condition of the Goſpel, is Obedience to the Law of Righteouſneſs; and that *every one who nameth the Name of Chriſt, depart from Iniquity*; they who are as well Workers of Iniquity as Workers of Miracles, who preach the Word of God, but practiſe it not, cannot expect the Portion and Inheritance of the Diſciples of Chriſt. To this Purpoſe is
1 Cor. 13. 1. that Diſcourſe of St. *Paul* to the *Corinthians*, *Tho' I ſpeak with the Tongues of Men and Angels, have the Gift of Propheſies, underſtand Myſteries and Knowledge, have a Faith ſtrong enough to remove*

move Mountains, if I have no Charity with all these, I am nothing. And therefore tho' he allows the Acquisition of spiritual Gifts for the Service and Edification of the Church; yet he there plainly prefers Charity before all of that nature, as being the Substance of that Condition required by Christ: for *Love is the fulfilling of the Law*, whereas the other is only the Instrument or Ornament of it in the World. But then,

II. We are also to consider, that every *sudden* and *imperfect* Act of Religion, tho' it more immediately tend to Holiness, and may be the *Beginning* or a *Branch* of it, every *partial Sketch* of Vertue and Goodness, tho' necessary and commendable, so far as it goes, is not therefore to be accounted fulfilling of the main Condition, or sufficient to be called a *doing of the Will of God*: For as the former might be compared to the producing of Leaves, the yielding of some Ornament and Protection to Christianity; so *this* may be resembled to the bringing forth of Buds and Blossoms, which yet arise not to the bearing of Fruit. And it is very plain, that every Inclination and good Affection for Religion, every honest Purpose and Resolution, every sudden Act of Contrition and Humiliation, and Instances of the

the like nature, which are but the *Beginnings* of Religion, are not to be esteem'd and charactered as fit Conditions of Acceptance and Discipleship. If they stay there, the Duty is only in its Greens, in the first Draught and Shadows; and if it never come to finishing, the Men are like those Creatures which imperfectly resemble the Human Shape, the *more deformed* for the *rude Conformity*. A Picture
Rom. 7. of this we have in the Description St. *Paul* has given us, where he brings in one justifying the Law of God, that it is holy, just and good, but yet he did not observe it; he accuses himself for what he did, and what he did not, *For the Good that I would, that I do not*; *and the Evil that I would not, that I do*; that by virtue of his inward Man he delighted in the Law of God, but yet by the Strength of another Law in his Members, contending and strugling against the Force of this, he was enslaved and captivated to the Law of Sin; he had many good Affections by times, but no good thing abiding in him; his Will was often right, and he resolved and purposed many excellent things, but still he was defective in the Performance. This is the Character of one who is *set forward* in his Work, but *goes not on with it*: And of this Temper we shall meet with many in the World, who have their

Fits

Fits of Repentance, Prayer and Fasting; who hear much, and are angry with themselves, condemn their own Follies, and think it reasonable they should live better: All which are excellent Lines of Duty, and fair Beginnings; but then they fill them up with such a Mixture of Impurity, such ill Colours, and foul Blemishes, and frequent Apostacies, that they destroy their own Foundation: They would fain be better, but yet they are not; nay, they go as far as *Herod*, who not only heard *John Baptist* gladly, but *did many things*; and farther than *Felix*, being *fully perswaded* they should be Christians; and they do thus much towards it, that they correct some Follies, put a stop to some vicious Habits, use the Solemnities of Religion, and are very punctual and severe in some external Observations of it; but then they are weary, they will go no farther, they grow confident and careless, and having done *something*, fancy they have done *enough* for Heaven, while Sin still retains its Hold, and the strong Man keeps Possession. All this is represented by our Saviour, in the Parable of the Seed, where that which fell on the stony Ground, or amongst Thorns, or by the Way-side, altho' it spring up for a time, grows into some Degrees of Height and Fairness, yet is lost

before

before the Time of Harveſt, and there is no Fruit ariſes from it. Theſe are ſo far from being true Diſciples, that they are the Stain and the Reproach of their Profeſſion, and inſtead of the Rewards aſſured unto that Fellowſhip, they ſhall find thoſe contrary ones, of him who knew his Maſter's Will, and did it not, *they ſhall be beaten with many Stripes.* But here, this Caution is to be interpoſed, that ſince the Strength and Power of Religion grows by the Meaſures of a Man, by eaſy and undiſcernable Degrees, that we be careful not to give an ill Name to every State of Imperfection: The Apoſtles uſed the Compellation of Babes and little Children to ſuch as were in this Infancy of Religion; and ſuch may be allowed, becauſe they are growing up, their Strength encreaſes, they ſtill riſe higher in their Profeſſion, and theſe are kindly and tenderly to be treated; but we are not ſpeaking of the Children, but the *Dwarfs* in Religion, People of no Stature, and of as little Hopes, who are already riſen to their full Pitch, when they may be ſaid to have but begun: and ſurely theſe are very unworthy the Stile of Diſciples, whoſe Meaſure it is to be perfect, as their Father which is in Heaven is perfect. But then,

III.

III. Thirdly, Since neither of these will satisfy the Condition, what is it that will? And here the Answer must be in general, *Doing the Will of God*, or a *Life of Holiness* and *good Works*, springing from a Principle of *Faith in Christ*. For thus stand the Terms of the New Covenant, which God has made with us through Christ our Redeemer. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting Life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see Life, but the Wrath of God abideth on him.* Here is *everlasting Life* promised by God, but *Faith in Christ* exacted as the Condition to be performed on our part. But St. *James* has told us, that *Faith without Works is dead*; and lest we should mistake in so important a Concern as the Terms of our Salvation, St. *Paul* (who has said as much of Justification by Faith as any body) has most clearly open'd the Terms of this Covenant, with regard to Works also, when he thus represents the Engagement both on God's part and ours. *The Foundation of God standeth sure, having this Seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his; and let every one that nameth the Name of Christ, depart from Iniquity.* God is pleased to engage on his part to take care of us in a particular manner, and to save us; but then our Part of the Cove-

John 3. 36.

2 Tim. 2. 19.

Covenant is, to *depart from Iniquity*, that is, to live in an entire Obedience to the Commands and Prohibitions laid before us in the Gospel. And this is a Condition so absolutely necessary, that he elsewhere represents it as the great Design and End of our Redemption. *Christ gave*
Tit. 2. 14. *himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works. The Grace of God appear'd for this purpose, to teach us, that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present World.* So that when we speak of *Faith*, as that which saves us, we mean such a Belief in Christ, our Saviour and Lawgiver, as makes us chearfully give up our selves to the Conduct of his Spirit; Obedience to his Laws, and Dependance upon his Sacrifice, to render us and all that we can do acceptable to his Heavenly Father. When we insist upon *good Works*, 'tis as the genuine Effect of such a true Faith, and such an Effect, as if it do not follow and appear, our Faith is vain, and all our Hopes of Heaven deceitful. From this close Connexion between Faith and good Works, it is, that when either are named, as the Condition of Salvation, the other is understood. And therefore, *Doing the Will of God*, includes both *believing in Christ*,

Christ, and living up to that practical *Rule of Righteousness*, which he has ordain'd for us to walk by. For thus our Saviour determined in answer to the Question of those Auditors, who demanded what they must do to work the Works of God? *This is the Work of God* (says he) *that ye believe on him, whom he hath sent.* John 6. 29. Here then we have a large Prospect: for that we may be the Disciples of Christ, we are to believe his Revelation, and to obey his Commands, and to reverence him as our Saviour and Lawgiver, and in imitation of him to put on the Form and Habit of a new Creature, in Newness of Life, a Course of Christian Holiness and Vertues; Sobriety with regard to our selves, Justice and Charity towards our Neighbour, Piety and Zeal towards God. This is the great Purpose of St. *James*, in his Discourse concerning the Perfection of the Christian Life, in the strict Union of Faith and good Works, where he assigns a just Portion of Duty to both: for he who believes, does what he ought. *Thou believest*, says he, *that there is one God, thou dost well*; but then believing alone is not enough, *for Faith without Works is dead*, and the Religion of it is no more than the evil Spirits are able to practise, *the Devils also believe and tremble.* The Apostle represents it by the Insignifican- Jam. 2. 19.

cy of the kind Words of him, who bids his needy Brother depart in Peace, and get him better Cloaths and fuller Provisions, but still assists him not in either; the Neglect betrays the Charity, and the Man is yet as naked as before: Even so Faith, altho' it be the Profession of the Truth, and those sound Words which Christ revealed; yet when it stands thus by it self, assists nothing to Vertue and the Perfection of Religion; it is but naked, nay, worse than that, says the Apostle, *it is dead*: But when it inspires and actuates all the remaining Parts of Duty, when it is an Argument and a Principle, when it provokes to Holiness, when it convinces the Man, and supports his Religion; then a Christian may be said to be doing the Will of God: and this is to arrive to the Degree of a new Creature, *viz.* to live the Life of Christ, to keep the Commandments of God, to do the Work and Business of renewed and transform'd People, to live after the Spirit, and not after the Flesh; which being the old and natural Principle, is unfit to govern the new Life. And now that we have gone thus far, ye may imagine, that there is nothing farther to be added: But there is one Word remaining, which can by no means be spared from this Argument. Our Endeavours must

extend

extend to *ALL the Will of God*, and not to ſome Parts only. Therefore,

IV. *Fourthly*, Let it be obſerved, the true Diſciple of Chriſt ſets no Bounds to his Obedience: He neither ſtraitens it with regard to the *Subject*, nor the *Degree* or *Meaſure*. He does not pick and chuſe what Commands he will comply with, and reject the reſt; he does not ſingle out the moſt eaſy, grateful, popular, or advantageous Vertues; but as chearfully takes up the Yoak of the moſt difficult and painful, the moſt unpopular and ſelf-denying, whenever Providence puts an Occaſion for them in his way. He does not only adhere to his Duty while the Sea is ſmooth, the Weather fair, and the Wind favourable; but under the rougheſt Storms of Temptation, Affliction, or Perſecution: He will not recede in any point from a good Conſcience, let what will happen; his Duty he both knows and does, the Event he leaves to God. Nor will he ſtint his Vertues as to the Growth and Meaſure of them; he knows he can never be too good, and therefore he inceſſantly labours to grow better; he daily ſtrives to improve in a more nice and ſtrict Obedience to all God's Commands, in a more fervent and devout Performance of all Duties, and in a

more exalted Degree, and a more exact Practice of every Vertue. In short, he aims at *Perfection*, tho' in this Life he cannot reach it: The Love of God constrains him; he would be like God, because he loves *him*, and is therefore in love with Holiness. He thinks (and he thinks truly too) that he does not sufficiently do the Will of God, if he can satisfy himself with any thing short of an exact and persevering Conformity thereto: for we are expresly commanded by our Holy Master, *to be perfect, as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect*; that is, sincerely to endeavour to come as near the Pattern of his excellent Holiness as we can, by copying it in all manner of Vertues, and in the most exalted Height of them. So St. *Paul* exhorts also, *I beseeech you, Brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus Christ, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk, and to please God, ye would abound more and more.* And so St. *Peter* too, *Giving all Diligence, add to your Faith, Vertue; and to Vertue, Knowledge; and to Knowledge, Temperance; and to Temperance, Patience; and to Patience, Godliness; and to Godliness, Brotherly Kindness; and to Brotherly Kindness, Charity: for if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the Knowledge*

Mat. 5. 48.

1 Thess. 4. 1.

2 Pet. 1. 5.

ledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Where ye see plainly, that it is required, not only that these things should be in us, but that we should abound in them; and by this continual and industrious Progress towards Perfection, we shall make it appear we are true Christians. If it be demanded, whether this Height of Perfection, or continual Industry to attain it, be so necessary, that we cannot be true Disciples of Christ without it? I answer, That *he alone belongs to Christ, who hath the Spirit of Christ abiding in him*; and where the Spirit of Christ dwells, it will assuredly possess a Man with a most ardent Desire and Ambition to be whatever Christ would have him, and to speak and act as Christ would speak and act upon a like Occasion; it will always stimulate and excite to farther Degrees of Holiness, because he inwardly delights in the Law of God, and is thoroughly convinced of the Reasonableness, the Pleasure, and the Excellence of the Divine Life. I answer also, that tho' Perfection cannot be attain'd in this Life, and therefore we may be Christians *without attaining* it; yet our Duty herein is so plainly laid down, that I dare by no means say we can be saved *without sincerely and diligently aiming* at it, and coming up to it *as nearly* as we may; and tho' Almighty God may please, Rom. 8. 9.

out of the Fulneſs of his Mercy, to *accept of leſs*, yet ſince he *requires ſo much*, it muſt be look'd upon as the only ſafe Rock, whereon to lay the Foundation of a Chriſtian's Hopes of Happineſs. Perhaps this may offend thoſe who are for getting to Heaven *with as little Trouble as they can*, and are for no more Vertue, Piety and Goodneſs, than they think will juſt ſerve to ſave them: but this cannot be help'd; for we muſt be faithful, and in ſetting down the Meaſures of Duty, we are not to examine what Men uſually do, or what they have a mind to do, but what God requires of them.

Thus (by the Bleſſing of God) I have finiſhed my Explication of this moſt excellent Sermon of our Saviour in the Mount, and have endeavoured to ſhew the true Meaning, Latitude, and Extent of every Precept: and were this noble Scheme of Religion put in practice by all thoſe that pretend to be the Diſciples of Chriſt, how glorious and how comfortable a Place would even this World be: which, on the contrary, neglecting theſe Rules, which would make them happy as well as holy, it is filled with Violence and Injuſtice, Feuds and Factions, Impiety, Profaneneſs, and Hypocriſy, Lewdneſs and Debauchery, Cenſoriouſneſs and Hard-heartedneſs, and every Vice that

may

may make one another uneasy here, or lead to Eternal Misery hereafter.

What yet remains, is only to consider the Historical Conclusion of the Evangelist upon this Sermon, and his general Observation of the *Manner* of our Saviour's Teaching, and the *Effect* of it.

The Conclusion.

MATT. VII. 28, 29.

And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these Sayings, the People were astonished at his Doctrine.
For he taught them as one having Authority, and not as the Scribes.

THESE are the Words of the Evangelist St. *Matthew*, wherein he shews what Effect our Saviour's most excellent Sermon had upon the Audience, *The People were astonished at his Doctrine.* And likewise what it was that made that Impression upon them, *viz.* the *Difference* there was in the Authority of his Teaching, from that of the Scribes. Let us therefore look into *the Ground* of their Astonishment, the *Difference they observed in our*

our Saviour's way of teaching from that of the Scribes. The Evangeliſt expreſſes it thus, He taught them ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων, *as one that had Power or Authority*, and not as the Scribes. Commentators differ in explaining this Word ἐξουσία, which our Tranſlation renders *Authority*; but including the ſeveral of their Interpretations, and adding farther what I take to be implied therein, I ſhall ſum up the Differences of our Saviour's Teaching from that of the *Jewiſh* Doctors, ſo far as I think was here intended by that diſtinguiſhing Character of *Authority* or *Power*, under the following Heads.

(1.) He taught them *as a Prophet ſent from God* to perfect and compleat the Revelation of his Will, and *not as a meerly human Teacher.* The Spirit of Prophecy had ceaſed in the Church for ſeveral Ages; the Scribes did not pretend to it. They only taught what they had learn'd in the Schools of their Rabbi's, explain'd and commented upon the ſacred Text; and this very corruptly too. But our Saviour knowing that he was come from God, with full Authority not only to reſcue the Moral Law from their falſe Gloſſes, but to refine upon the Text it ſelf, not only to explain, but to improve and perfect it, expreſs'd himſelf in a manner ſuitable to his High Commiſſion. *Ye have*

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been taught, says he, *by your Learned Doctors so and so*; *BUT I SAY UNTO YOU thus and thus.* Here therefore was an Air of Authority in his Preaching, which the *Scribes* neither did nor could pretend to, and which accordingly his Audience knew nothing of before.

(2.) This Authority in his Preaching was attended with and illustrated by a *Power of working Miracles*; which evidently shewed him to be a Teacher more than human. For tho' this upon the Mount was one of his first Sermons, yet even *before* this (yea, and immediately before it) he had gone about *healing all manner of Sicknesses, and all manner of Diseases amongst the People.* And the Admiration of this Divine Power in him, it was that actually drew the Multitude together about him, when he delivered this excellent Sermon. Here therefore was such a Proof of his Prophetic Mission, such an Authority added to his Discourses, as must needs amaze the People, who had never known any thing like it from their other Teachers.

(3.) The *Matter* of his Doctrine was every way worthy of a Teacher sent from God. The *Scribes* indeed entertain'd the People with a Set of idle Traditions, Superstitions, and trifling Observances, and many little Exactnesses in Ceremony:

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But our Lord inſtructed them in the weightier Matters of the Law, laid out to them a moſt divine and excellent Scheme of Morals, and taught the *Inſide* as well as the *Outſide* of Religion. He would not ſuffer them to reſt ſatisfied with the formal Shews, or with the outward Mechaniſm of Vertue; but carried his Precepts *to the Heart*, requir'd Sincerity in the inward Man, and thereby alſo ſhewed an Authority to which the Scribes could not pretend: for who can impoſe Laws upon the *Heart*, the *Thoughts* and the *Deſires* of Man, but God who made him, and ſent our Bleſſed Lord, his only and eternal Son, to inſtruct and govern him?

(4.) And laſtly, theſe Precepts were delivered with ſuch a *Certainty*, *Boldneſs*, and *Plainneſs*, as far excelled the Teaching of the Scribes. *They*, as being guided only by the Opinions of their Schools, could deliver nothing clearly, and with a full Aſſurance; and as human *Ignorance* might miſlead them, ſo did human *Paſſions* too: They were to oblige the People by ſervile and undue Compliances, enervating the Law of God by ſuch Interpretations, as would gratify the Pride, and other Vices of their Congregation, or give ſuch a Turn to Religion, as would beſt ſerve their own baſe and worldly Intereſts.

reſts. On the contrary, our Saviour's Teaching was with a poſitive and definitive Certainty, becoming one who thoroughly knew the Mind of God, one in whom was hid all the Treaſures of Wiſdom and Knowledge, in whom dwelt all the Fulneſs of the Godhead bodily. *For he whom God hath ſent* (ſaith *John the Baptiſt*, ſpeaking of our Saviour) *ſpeaketh the Words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by Meaſure unto him.* And as he delivered his Precepts with an authoritative *Certainty*, ſo he delivered them with an authoritative Boldneſs and Impartiality: he had no occaſion to fear that any thing in his own Conduct ſhould reproach him with his own Precepts. He boldly delivered the moſt ſevere Doctrines and Inſtructions, not caring whom they would diſpleaſe; he *ſearch'd* the Wounds of that imperfect and corrupt Morality the Scribes had taught them, *to the bottom*, as knowing that this was neceſſary to ſet them right, and bring them into the healing Way of Salvation, tho' their falſe Guides would ſtorm at it, and the People too would probably be offended to be undeceiv'd, and put upon a more laborious and effectual Straitneſs than that to which they had hitherto been trained.

John 3. 34.

Thus I have explain'd, as well as I am able, the Difference betwixt our *Saviour's*

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Teaching, and that of the *Scribes*, in reſpect to the *Authority* and *Power* with which he preach'd, according to the Evangeliſt's Obſervation. I ſhall conclude with a few Words to recommend the Excellency of the Revelation made by Chriſt (including the *whole Syſtem* of it, as well as *this* his *Sermon on the Mount*) which ſhould farther affect us Chriſtians with a ſpecial Regard to it. And here particularly we are to conſider, that it was the Revelation, not of an inferior Prophet, tho' commiſſioned and inſpired from Heaven; but of the *Eternal Son of God*, under the Diſguiſe of Human Nature. And of how much greater Authority ſuch a Revelation ought to be, we may learn from the Author to the *Hebrews*, *Therefore we ought to give the more earneſt heed to the things which we have heard, leſt at any time we ſhould let them ſlip. For if the Word ſpoken by Angels was ſtedfaſt, and every Tranſgreſſion and Diſobedience receiv'd a juſt Recompence of Reward; how ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great Salvation, which at the firſt began to be ſpoken by the LORD, and was confirm'd to us by them that heard him.* And again, *Moſes was faithful as a Servant, but Chriſt as a Son over his own Houſe*, or Family, the Church. Thus does the Apoſtle amplify the Authority of Chriſt's Teaching, Heb. 2. 1, 2, 3. Heb. 3. 5, 6.

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as being first revealed to the World, not by Angels, not by Prophets, not by usual and common Messengers; but *by the Son of God himself.* We are to consider this Revelation also as most *clear* and *perspicuous.* The most important Truths were formerly hid in Types and Symbols. *Moses* had a Glory upon his Face, but a Vail put upon that Glory. But now the Vail upon his Face is *done away in Christ, and we all with open Face, as in a Glass, behold the Glory of the Lord.* Now are the greatest Truths and Promises no more mask'd under Types and Shadows, but exposed unto us with open Face. No Precepts can be plainer or better than those which are given us by our Saviour. Were all the Philosophers of former Ages, were all the Prophets that ever lived, were all the Angels that are in Heaven, summon'd to meet and consult together, to prescribe Laws, and to propose Motives to Human Nature, they could not add one useful thing to what Christ has revealed. He has forbidden whatever dishonours God, disturbs the World, or weakens and blemishes Human Nature, as *Pride, Covetousness, Sensuality,* and all the other Sins that flow from them; and on the contrary, has commanded whatever tends to the Glory of our Creator, to the general Welfare of Mankind, and the Ease and

2 Cor. 3. 14.

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Comfort of every ſingle Perſon; as, *Faith in God* for our Support under all the Uncertainties of this World; Love to him, that we may enjoy him, and ſo be happy and bleſſed in him; *mutual Love to one another*, and all the Vertues thence ariſing, *Meekneſs*, *Patience*, and *Humility*, that we may be eaſy to our ſelves, and alſo helpful each to other. And laſtly, that we may want nothing to perſwade or aſſiſt ſincere Obedience to theſe Precepts, our Saviour aſſures us of God's Grace to ſtrengthen our Weakneſs and Infirmities. He threatens everlaſting Woes to obſtinate and impenitent Sinners, and he promiſes eternal Happineſs to every true and faithful Penitent. We may add farther, that this Revelation by Chriſt is the *very laſt Revelation*, that God will ever make to the World, and therefore we ought to have the greateſt Regard imaginable to what he has delivered to us as the Mind and Will of God. All former Revelations were but Introductions to this, *carnal Ordinances*, ſays the Apoſtle, *impoſed* on the Jews *till the Time of Reformation*. This Time of Reformation was the Diſpenſation of the Goſpel by our Saviour. *God, who at ſundry Times and in divers Manners ſpake in Times paſt unto the Fathers by the Prophets, has in theſe laſt Days ſpoken unto us by his Son.* Heb. 9. 10. Heb. 1. 1, 2.

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The Gospel therefore is the last Discovery and Attempt of the Divine Wisdom for the Reformation of the World; nothing has since appear'd, or ever will appear by Divine Authority and Appointment, to make the least Alteration in it. If ever we aim at or expect eternal Happiness, it must be in the Way which Christ has taught us, upon those Terms, upon that Faith, and that Scheme of Piety and Vertue, which *He* has prescribed to us. Let us therefore pray in the Words of our most excellent Church, *Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our Learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by Patience and Comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed Hope of everlasting Life, which thou hast given in our Saviour Jesus Christ.* Amen.

FINIS.

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